



The impact of appreciative inquiry on merging cultures

by

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DECLARATION

I, Carol Jane Earley, student number 5922038, declare that **“THE IMPACT OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY ON MERGING CULTURES”** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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THE IMPACT OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY ON MERGING CULTURES

by
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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of appreciative inquiry (AI) on the development of organisational culture after a merger. The empirical study was conducted among the employees of a telecommunications company in South Africa. AI was conducted after a merger of teams within a department of the organisation to assist in the development of a new and combined team culture. Interactive qualitative analysis (IQA) was used to determine the impact of AI on the new culture. The sample size for the study was 35 for the AI session and 20 for the IQA.

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study in order to understand and explore the experiences of individuals who had recently been a part of the change process. The research design was based on IQA, a structured approach which constructs a systematic representation of the experience.

It was found that AI allowed the teams to gain a new understanding of and insight into what it meant to work together as a unit. A significant difference was noted in the IQA facilitation that was performed six months after the AI session. This research therefore confirmed that the AI had a significant positive impact on the culture of the organisation under investigation.

KEY WORDS

Organisational culture, positive change, appreciative inquiry, impact, whole-system integration, social transformation, consultation, organisational effectiveness, critical stance, merger

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this chapter is to provide the background to and the motivation for the research, and to then formulate the research problem statement and research questions. Both the general and specific aims are formulated and the paradigm perspectives presented. The research design and research method are briefly discussed, and this is followed by the chapter layout. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Organisational culture is a substantial facet of the achievement of the set goals of any organisation, and is gaining momentum as a predictive and explanatory construct in organisational studies (Liu, Shuibo, & Meiyang, 2006). Martins and Coetzee (2011) concur that organisational culture is central to an organisation's success.

In research, the efficiency of an organisation's culture is repeatedly considered as a function of the values and beliefs the employees of the organisation uphold (Luthans, 2012; Weiss, 2001). Weiss (2001) supports the fact that organisational culture often determines the manner in which policies and best practices are communicated and understood, and accepted or rejected.

The dominant organisational culture is a system of shared meaning that employees hold (Martins & Coetzee, 2011), and organisational culture as such encompasses the standards and norms that advocate the behaviour of employees in any given organisation (Martins & Martins, 2003). According to Martins and Coetzee (2011), this culture distinguishes the organisation from other organisations. Robbins and Judge (2011) pinpoint the seven primary characteristics that denote the core of an organisation's culture as innovation, risk taking, attention to detail, people orientation, team orientation, aggressiveness and stability.

Schein (1990, p. 9) describes organisational culture as "a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well

enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the appropriate manner in which to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems". This definition enables one, where feasible, to assume that organisational culture encompasses created assumptions, which are acknowledged as normal methods of operating, and are subsequently passed on to new members of an organisation (Manetje & Martins, 2009).

Chatman, Caldwell, O Reilly and Doerr (2014) elude to the relationship between organisational culture and financial and technological performance as remaining elusive. A strong culture that aligns members' behaviour with organisational objectives boosts financial performance. Technological advancements, dynamic customer demands, increasing globalisation, the blurring of organisational boundaries, and increasing competition unite to produce organisational environments "more turbulent and volatile than ever before" (Parry & Proctor-Thompson, 2003, p. 377). The manner in which change is tackled in an organisation determines how effective and sustainable cultural change is (Ladkin & Taylor 2010).

Classically, humans digress in the course of change by tackling change with an analysis of the problems presented. Change, mergers, acquisitions, downsizing and restructuring are a key segment in the survival of organisations today and are fundamental in promoting innovation, profitability and market share (Weiner & Hill, 2008). The consequential synergies from these undertakings of change, mergers and restructuring, develop improved synergy and the conceivable capacity of the merged entity to be more efficacious than the individual organisation (Weiner and Hill 2008). According to Weiner and Hill (2008), long-term sustainability is the involvement and integration of employees and individuals from the outset, in order to create a common new identity and shared vision.

With regard to organisations, according to the "Klynveld, Peat, Marwick, Goerdeler" KPMG (2011) white paper on post-merger people integration and the mismanagement of post-merger people integration states, this failure to successfully combine diverging corporate cultures is a contributing factor to employee disengagement, key talent attrition, goal misalignment, culture misalignment and litigations. It is therefore vital for organisations to be aware of people issues right from the design to the implementation stage of any change process (KPMG, 2011). Subsequent to

this report, the Deloitte (2014) report also pointed out that failure to successfully combine diverging corporate cultures that affect the merging of cultures before, during and after the integration phase, is one of the more enduring subjects for alarm (Deloitte, 2014,p.10). This is perhaps why Deloitte (2014) states that a merger or drastic change is more likely to destroy rather than create the value stakeholders expect.

Although it is deemed non-negotiable to have an engaged workforce after a merger or acquisition, many human resource integration strategies are not implemented holistically (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). The result is therefore failure to include those employees affected by interventions such as Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is acknowledged as a strength-based organisational change approach grounded in its positive development potential (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008).

AI is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations and the relevant world around them (Cooperrider, 2005). What is distinctive about AI is the discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms (Cooperrider, 2005). By virtue of its inquiring methodology, AI strengthens a system’s capability to understand itself, inquires about and benchmarks the high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies of the organisation and questions the deeper corporate visions of treasured and achievable potential (Cooperrider, 2005). AI involves the type of discovery phase question that would generate more awareness and inspire the individual to talk about the most thought-provoking experience he or she has had during the culture transformation process (Bushe, 2013). Instead of vindicating the past, AI supports the organisation in the construction and creation of new ideas, perceptions and metaphors in the promotion of enriched organisational culture transformation (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The powerful nature of these ideas establishes a number of distinctive methods for change. In a central way, AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. AI centrally involves the mobilisation of inquiry through the crafting of the

unconditional positive question, often involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people (Cooperrider, 2005).

Gergen (1978, p.1346) defines this generativity as the "capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of the culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is 'taken for granted' and thereby furnish new alternatives for social actions". The construction of this more generative discovery question enables individuals to consider alternative strategies to develop in the transformation of the organisation (Bushe, 2013). In the absence of a generative emphasis, the organisation will fail in the pursuit of the AI outcome and process (Bushe, 2013). The transformation referred to would be the changes in the distinctiveness of the system and the environment, and the qualitative changes in the state of being of that system. Bushe (2013) expresses concern that the current methodologies utilised by many AI consultants overemphasise the importance of so-called 'the positive stuff' and place less importance on the generativity of the AI process.

The experiences of positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought action repertoires, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Frederickson, 2001). One could postulate that moments in people's lives are characterised by the experiences of positive emotions, which are "moments that are not clouded by negative emotions" (Frederickson, 2001, pp.220). Positive emotion states are worth cultivating as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved well-being over time (Fredrickson 2001). According to Achor (2010), individuals with a positive mind-set do have a greater generative capacity with regards to change. In South Africa today, many organisations are facing the challenge of change, which impacts the culture of the South African organisations and highlights the need for more research in the field of AI as an OD intervention.

It would be reasonable to determine the extent that organisations could utilise AI during or after a merger for the development of a new organisational culture. In addition, it would be necessary to establish how this would benefit industrial and organisational psychologists, and individuals working in the field to intensify their understanding of the ability of AI and its research capacity to support the amalgamation of diverse organisational cultures. It is hoped that this study will add to the

body of current knowledge on AI as an Organisational Development intervention and its effect after any change in the culture of an organisation.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the increasing application of AI as an OD intervention, the findings in the literature by Bushe (2005, p. 162) question “what is going on in the practice of AI? and the extent to which AI practice and outcomes match the prescriptions of AI theorists”. In reviewing the literature, every published case study of AI that the authors Bushe and Kassam (2003) could find prior to 2003 was systematically examined and assessed against predetermined criteria (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Bushe 1995, 2001b; Cooperrider (2005), Barrett, & Srivasta, 1995; Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987;1999, 2001; Fry & Barrett, 2002; Ludema, 2002; Ludema, Wilmot & Srivasta, 1997; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). In the literature, Bushe and Kassam (2005) found only two attempts by theorists to measure transformational change.

Hence there is considerable scope for rethinking AI conceptually in the field of OD, more specifically in relation to mergers and acquisitions. In addition, there is a need to scientifically explore the experience of an AI intervention by individuals and organisations after the intervention. Furthermore, no research could be found in the literature that used interactive qualitative analysis to study the impact. This resulted in the researcher having to consider determining, the experience of an AI intervention for developing a new organisational culture after a merger.

In this study, the researcher attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What is understood by organisational culture and the development thereof?
- What is understood by AI as an OD intervention?
- What impact can AI have on the development of a new organisational culture?

1.3 AIM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 General aim

The general aim of this study was to determine the impact of an AI intervention on the development of organisational culture after a merger.

1.3.2 Theoretical aims

The specific theoretical aims were as follows:

- To conceptualise the development of organisational culture
- To conceptualise AI as an organisational development intervention for developing a new organisational culture after a merger

1.3.3 Empirical aims

The specific empirical aims of the research were as follows:

- To design and facilitate an AI intervention
- To explore the impact of AI on the organisational culture after a merger
- To discuss the implications relating to the change and adaptation of organisational cultures and to make recommendations for future research

1.4 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

According to Mouton and Marais (1996) a paradigm comprises a proposal of suppositions and a collection of mutually accepted achievements theories, solutions, predictions and laws about human nature, and offers a model for conducting research.

1.4.1 Social constructionism

This research was based on social constructionism as a paradigm, which is defined as the social construction of a reality, and examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared assumptions about that reality (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The paradigm of social constructionism gives extension to the methodology of elucidation and command of the world through its language and culture. Social constructionism is a post-modern paradigm characterised by instigating dialogues with other paradigms (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Awareness is shaped through social methods (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). This knowledge and awareness are continually explained as a particular stance in a clear mindfulness articulating configuration. Individuals portray their reciprocal alliances by associating with one another. Social constructionism is

established because a group of individuals not only acquire new awareness, but also set the rubrics for this new awareness (Gergen & Gergen, 2003).

1.4.2 Ontological assumptions

Geldenhuis (2015) suggests from a social constructionist perspective that the world is not viewed as an object, but rather as a relational construction by people. From an ontological perspective. This, according to Geldenhuis (2015), does not result from the world as an object, but rather from the shared or relational construction of the world by people who are agreement about what the world comprises. Social construction is therefore not concerned about ontology separate from epistemology (Bowen, 1998), but rather in the meanings people cocreate. According to Gergen and Gergen (2003), the focus is on the process through which people arrive at their understandings of themselves and their worlds. Hence social constructionism accepts and appreciates the existence of multiple socially constructed realities (Geldenhuis, 2015).

1.4.3 Epistemological assumptions

Understanding and knowledge are regarded as social because they are expressed in the form of a relationship. The people in this reciprocal relationship define their reciprocal positions by relating to one another. Knowledge and power are thus interdependent (Geldenhuis, 2015). The epistemological assumption of social constructionism, according to Geldenhuis (2015), is that knowledge is constructed through social processes, and accordingly signifies distinctive realisms. Knowledge is consequently not viewed as objective, but offers a subjective frame of reference (Geldenhuis, 2015).

IQA, according to Northcutt and McCoy, (2004, p. 16) postulates that “the observer and the observed are dependent or interdependent”. “The object of research in IQA is clearly reality in consciousness” (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 16). The selection of groups is made from those closest to the phenomenon, and in this particular study, the selection was made from the individuals who had participated in the AI conducted in the organisation under investigation.

IQA differs from more traditional forms of qualitative research because it questions the notion that the researcher must analyse the data. In IQA, the constituents are tasked with the theoretical analysis and interpretation of their own data

The specific technique applied in this study was the AI approach, which emphasises the positive, and works in an organisation that builds on these positive strengths. Thus IQA afforded the group an opportunity to reflect with the authority on their experience of the AI and the consequent visible and tangible results.

1.5 THE DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT

The research was conducted in the discipline of industrial and organisational (I/O) psychology. As an applied division of psychology, I/O psychology is both an academic and an applied field that studies human behaviour relating to work, organisations and productivity in a particular type of setting and situation within an organisation (Cascio, 2001; SIOP, 1999). Landy and Conte (2013, p. 7) define I/O psychology as the “application of psychological principles, theory and research in the work setting.” The academic field studies the different topics in the various subfields of I/O both theoretically and empirically in order to produce new knowledge and solutions aimed at addressing the crucial questions and challenges emanating from the particular socioeconomic contexts and cultures in which organisations are situated Landy and Conte (2013).

Applied I/O psychology uses the psychological principles and the new knowledge and solutions generated by research to solve problems in the work context (Bergh, 2009; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2010). The main objective is to apply the psychological principles, knowledge and insight into human behaviour, in order to gain an understanding of people at work, and support them in elucidating their tangible work tribulations (Schreuder, 2005).

The basis of this study was to utilise the following subdisciplines of I/O psychology incorporating the study of people at work (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005).

The research was conducted at a South African business service provider to the telecommunications industry. The company renders services for the effective ware-

housing and logistics for the telecommunications company (telco). The telco initiated a programme to change business partners from the previous service provider to the current service provider. When this change was implemented, the current service provider agreed to integrate the existing employees into their workforce.

Permission was obtained from the managing director of the organisation and the AI session and ensuing IQA focus groups were conducted with the entire warehouse staff of the organisation. The IQA focus group sessions were conducted after the AI session and included members of both the management team and the warehouse staff.

1.5.1 Organisational psychology

Although there are numerous definitions of organisational psychology, in this study, the positive-based definition of organisational psychology of Luthans (2012) was utilised. According to Luthans (2012, p. 71), organisational psychology can be defined as “the study and application of positive oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace”.

1.5.2 Organisational development

Organisational development (OD) is both a professional field of social action and an area of scientific inquiry (Cummings & Worley, 2005). The practice of OD comprises a comprehensive continuum of actions, with infinite alternatives. Team building with top corporate management, culture change in an organisation, and job enrichment in a firm are all examples of OD. Similarly, the study of OD focuses on a comprehensive variety of topics, comprising the effects of change, the methods of organisational change and the factors influencing OD success (Cummings & Worley, 2005).

1.5.3 The psychological paradigm

The paradigm of positive psychology, which is embedded in humanistic psychology, was adopted in this research. Martin Seligman was the innovator of positive psychology (Lazarus, 2003), although the term itself was first used by Abraham Maslow

(1957) by applying the proposition of science to investigate the theory on why people are contented. Seligman discovered that the most satisfied, upbeat individuals transpired to be individuals who had determined and used their distinctive pattern of “signature strengths,” such as humanity, temperance and persistence (Seligman, 2004). This image of contentment combines the moral ethics of Confucius, Mencius and Aristotle with modern psychological theories of motivation. Seligman’s (2004) inference is that happiness has three elements that can be enriched, namely the Pleasant Life, the Good Life and the Meaningful Life. The primary nucleus of positive psychology is positive states of awareness (Seligman, 2004).

1.6 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The following theoretical concepts were deemed relevant to this study:

- *Organisational culture* is described by Martins and Terblanche (2003, p. 64) as the deep-seated values and beliefs that the members of an organisation share. These values and beliefs have been perceived to work well for the organisation in the past and have therefore been accepted by the organisation as valid. It is these values and beliefs that assist the organisation to further understand the practices and the means to achieve objectives and goals.
- *Appreciative inquiry* is the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).
- *Change*, as theorised by Kurt Lewin, is a three-stage model that has come to be known as the unfreezing-change-refreeze model that requires prior learning in order to be rejected and replaced (Schein, 1999).
- *Mergers & acquisitions (M&A)* involve the consolidation of companies. Differentiating the two terms, *mergers* involve combining two companies to form one, while *acquisitions* mean that one company is taken over by another. M&A is one of the major aspects of the corporate finance world (Investopedia, 2017).

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach adopted in this study was qualitative and aimed at understanding and exploring the experiences of individuals in an AI intervention who were

involved in a change process, more specifically a merger of teams. Qualitative research necessitates comprehensive assignment with the object/subject of the study with the extrusion of a lesser number of cases to be studied. It accesses numerous foundations of data with malleable design features that allow the researcher to modify the study wherever necessary (Ankara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Cresswell (1994, p.12) states that in qualitative research, there are multiple perspectives of reality, which are subjective and open to researcher bias as the researcher actively participates in the research process and analyses the data, and in so doing builds an understanding of a complex set of processes while reporting on the participants' views. This method increases concerns associated with a deficiency in rigour, trustworthiness and reliability (Cresswell, 2009). The qualitative researcher can use numerous techniques in the progression of a single study and, as such, is well-equipped to conduct research that produces a well-rounded, full-bodied interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative researchers employ methods aimed at telling the stories of these participants, and revealing the connotations involved in everyday life. The qualitative approach allows the researchers to construct an opportunity within which the participants are able to formulate and verbalise themselves in a modus most comfortable and apposite to their world view (Cresswell, 2009).

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was an evaluation of the use of AI as an OD intervention performed on a portion of the staff of a large telecommunications company based in Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. The specific technique applied for evaluating the impact of the intervention was interactive qualitative analysis (IQA).

IQA is a structured qualitative design (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). According to Bargate (2014), focus groups construct a systematic representation of the experience. IQA promotes the fact that the participants or constituents (as they are referred to in IQA) are the most suitable people who can construct a graphic representation of the system's impacts and conclusions (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). They (2004, p. 44) define constituents as a "group of people who have a shared understanding of the experience". IQA as a research design is consistent with the principles of social constructionism because it "privileges the nature of socially constructed meaning"

(Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 44). IQA “presumes that knowledge and power are largely dependent” (Northcutt & McCoy 2004, p. 4). In IQA, the researcher does not interpret the data – the constituents create and unravel their own data, while the researcher merely facilitates the process. This means that the postmodern concerns of trustworthiness, dependability and conformability are almost eliminated (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODS

The method of IQA was used as an interactive process to explore the experiences of employees and management referred to in IQA as constituents, participating in AI interventions. These constituents are defined by Bargate (2014, p.12) as a “group of people who have a shared understanding of the phenomenon”. These constituents are selected according to the IQA criteria of distance and power (Bargate, 2014, p.14) in relation to the phenomenon being studied. IQA presumes that knowledge and power are largely dependent (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p.16).

1.9.1 Research setting

The research was conducted at a South African business service provider to the telecommunications industry. The company renders services for the effective warehousing and logististocs for the telecommunications company. The company initiated a programme to change business partners from tyeh previous service provider to the current service eprovider. When this change was implemented, thecurrent service provider agreed to integrate the existing employees into their workforce.

Permission was obtained from the managing director of the organisation and the AI session and ensuing IQA focus groups were conducted with the entire warehouse staff of teh organisation. The IQA focus group sessions were conducted after the AI session and included both members of the management team and the warehouse staff.

1.9.2 Sampling

The method of IQA was used, which is a purposive sampling method that can be used to explore the experiences of employees and management (constituents) who participate in AI interventions. Bargate (2014, p.12) defines constituents as a “group

of people who have a shared understanding of the phenomenon". These constituents are selected according to the IQA criteria of distance and power (Bargate, 2014, p. 14) in relation to the phenomenon being studied. IQA presumes that "knowledge and power are largely dependent" (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p.16).

In this research, a stratified purposive sampling method was used to illustrate the characteristics of particular subgroups of interest and to facilitate comparisons between the different groups. The sample was representative of an information-rich sample of the population and was adequate for the IQA approach.

IQA utilises focus groups to produce a systematic representation of a phenomenon from the participants' experiences of the phenomenon being studied, and for purposes of this study, these were the participants in the AI intervention. This group was represented by individuals, who according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 87), have knowledge of the issue at stake, have the ability to reflect on the question and transfer those thoughts into words, are homogeneous with respect to the important dimensions of distance and power and can respect the group dynamics. According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 16), in IQA, knowledge and power are dependent, and the constituents are selected because they hold the power and knowledge of the phenomenon being studied through their membership of a particular group (Bargate, 2014). The main purpose of a focus group is to generate the categories of meanings or affinities to be used in a later interview protocol (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

1.9.3 Data collection analysis

The data was collected and analysed by means of IQA, a novel methodology that affords a coordinated methodology of effecting qualitative research. IQA is an innovative methodology providing a structured approach to conducting qualitative research. The participants in focus groups are actively engaged in data collection and analysis. Using content analysis of the data, participants articulate their experience of the phenomenon and identify emergent themes or affinities, and the relationship between the affinities. The affinities provide the protocol for the individual semi-structured interviews in which participants' experience of the phenomenon can be further explored. An interrelationship diagram (IRD) is developed portraying the

cause and effect or influence between affinities. The final outcome of the IQA process is a systems influence diagram (SID), which is a visual representation of the phenomenon, constructed through the lens of the focus group participants (Bargate, 2014).

The first phase involves focus groups and the production of a visual representation, which is then utilised in the semistructured interviews to follow. “The role of the researcher in an IQA focus group is that of facilitator with the intention of allowing the constituents to reflect on their experiences of the phenomenon being researched” Bargate (2014) (Northcutt & McCoy,2004).

1.9.4 Presenting the findings

Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 313) posit that in the description of the results, the researcher must address the first two research questions, and their affinities and relatedness. These affinities and relationships are described in the respondents’ words (Northcutt & McCoy,2004). This is because, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 313), IQA is designed to describe the perceptions of the phenomenon or the lived reality of the group 1. After all the interviews have been transcribed word for word, the researcher analyses the text for axial codes, which are specific examples of discourse that allude to an affinity. This is then documented in the individual axial code table (ACT) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Once this process has been completed, an uncluttered systems influence diagram (SID), which is a visual representation of an entire system of influences and outcomes, is completed (Northcutt & McCoy,2004).

1.9.5 Strategies employed to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the data

According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004), rigour in an IQA research design is achieved when data collection and analysis (1) are public and non-idiosyncratic; (2) are replicable within reasonable bounds; and (3) do not depend (especially for analysis) on the nature of elements themselves. An audit trail is created that accounts for every step in the data collection and analysis process.

IQA provides an audit trail of transparent and traceable procedures where the participants, and not the researcher as an expert, do the analysis and interpretation of

their data. The analysis of the data is as far as possible free from researcher bias as the researcher is merely a facilitator of the process (Bargate, 2014).

In light of the above discussion, the researcher employed a number of strategies to ensure that the quality of the research data was sound. Such strategies included but were not limited to the following:

- The well-being of the research participants was a priority. The researcher adopted an overt approach to the research, and as such, the individuals in the research setting knew who the researcher was and what she was doing. These individuals could then make an informed choice about whether they wished to participate in the project, and it was their prerogative to refuse (Dawson, 2007).
- The researcher familiarised herself with the culture of the participating organisation prior to conducting the focus group sessions.
- Different methods of data collection (triangulation) were applied because of the involvement of the participants in the thematic analysis, and through the confirmation of these themes with participants during interviews, IQA provided a perfect platform for triangulation.
- Verbatim accounts of participant language were acquired by obtaining the literal statements of participants and quotations from documents.
- The researcher asked for permission to digitally record data by means of recorders. However, because of the type of premises (i.e. a cellular phone repair centre), permission was denied.

Lastly, the researcher actively searched for, recorded, analysed and reported on the negative or discrepant data that may have been an exception to patterns or that modified patterns found in data.

IQA methodology, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 340), attempts to “reveal the truth as constructed by a particular person or constituency by incorporating concepts from the three most important understandings of the meaning of truth namely correspondence, coherence and constructive”. “The correspondence theory of truth (CTT) understands truth to be a correspondence with facts or reality

determined by experience” (Northcutt and McCoy(2004, p. 340). Hence CTT is empirical in nature, demanding that the truth be consistent with the external reality as it is observed or experienced.

1.9.6 Ethical considerations

All research should be conducted in a fair and ethical manner (Unisa, 2016). These ethical standards have been developed to ensure that not only social, legal and statutory requirements are met, but also that they provide guidelines on the type of behaviour to be expected from the researcher and what the consequences of deviant unprofessional behaviour would be.

The scope of the project was explained to the participants who were afforded an opportunity to discuss it. Participation was voluntary and the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time . Consent to conduct the research was obtained from the organisation.

The researcher utilised various strategies to ensure ethical research, which included but were not limited to the following:

- The wellbeing of participants was a top priority, with the participants knowing who the researcher was and the process involved, thus allowing them to make an informed choice about their participation in the research (Dawson, 2007). Participants signed a letter of consent in order for the research to be conducted.
- The researcher familiarised herself with the existing culture of the participating organisation by visiting the premises and holding discussions with the relevant stakeholders (Shenton, 2004).
- IQA enables a researcher to adopt different methods of data collection owing to the involvement of participants in thematic analysis and the confirmation of these themes.
- The researcher dealt with the data collected during the participants' reporting accurately by taking detailed notes before, during and after the sessions.
- The researcher observed the approach of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

1.10 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapter layout in this study is as follows:

Chapter 1 deals with the scientific orientation to the research. The focus of chapter 2 is a literature review on the development of organisational culture. The purpose of chapter 3 is to conceptualise AI as an organisational intervention for developing organisational culture. In chapter 4, the research design, which includes the research approach and method applied, is outlined. Chapter 5 deals with the research findings, and chapter 6 discusses the conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter 1 focused on the scientific orientation to the research, aligning AI and its value as an OD intervention and its possible capacity to assess the impact of AI on the merging of organisational cultures.

The background and motivation for the study were reviewed. The problem statement, aim and research objectives were discussed. The paradigm perspective of social constructionism and the ontological and epistemological assumptions were briefly outlined within the disciplinary context of I/O psychology. The research approach, design and method were considered in the context of the research setting. Sampling, data collection and analysis and the description of the results were discussed and the chapter concluded with the chapter layout.

CHAPTER 2

CHANGING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A specific overview of the study was provided in chapter 1. The aim of this chapter is to conceptualise the changing of organisational cultures. The rationale of this chapter is to provide a literature review of the topic of the research. The concept of organisational culture is defined with due consideration of the historical perspectives and development of an organisational culture. The differences between organisational culture and organisational climate are also highlighted. Different culture models are then examined, after which the importance of organisational culture is explained.

2.2 DEFINING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Organisational culture has been subject of considerable research for some time now, and continues to be an abstract theory on which there is little agreement about its definition. Changing organisational culture can be both a priority and a challenge, often the dominant culture of an organisation can be a constraint on the growth of the organisation.

As early as 1982, Deal and Kennedy began to investigate the issues of culture and management in organisations. Owing to the nature of culture, it is difficult to research the subject empirically, and the conventional use of quantitative methods such as questionnaires and laboratory observations is somewhat restricted.

According to Denison (1990), culture refers to the deep structure of an organisation, which is embedded in the values, beliefs and assumptions held by its members. These values, beliefs and principles offer the basis for an organisation's management system in addition to the established management practices and behaviours that exemplify and sustain those basic behaviours (Denison, 1990).

Schein and Pettigew both observed that culture is a consequence of progressive multifaceted learning that occurs among groups of people. Pettigew (1979), in-

cluded the perceptions of sociology and anthropology in his explanation of the concept, and perceived organisational culture to be a complex construct, expressed as a structure of universally and equally recognised connotations that serve a particular group in a particular instance.

Martins (2003, p.380) defines organisational culture as “a system of shared meaning held by its members, distinguishing the organisation from other organisations”. Martins (1989) draws on the work of researchers such as Schein who defines culture as “an integrated pattern of human behaviour which is unique to a particular organisation and which originated as a result of the organisations survival process and interaction with its environment. Culture directs the organisation to goal attainment, newly appointed employees must be taught what is regarded as the correct way of behaving” (Martins, 1989, p. 15).

Schein (1990, p.109) maintains that each culture researcher develops explicit or implicit paradigms that prejudice not only the definitions of the key concepts, but also the whole approach to the study of the phenomenon. Organisational culture in addition aids the basic function of reducing the anxiety that individuals experience when faced with cognitive uncertainty or overload (Schein, 1983).

The present study adopted the theoretical model developed by Schein (1990, 1992), who from a social psychology perspective, described organisational culture as a “more deeply rooted level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are common to individuals of an organisation, that function unconsciously, and that describe, in an implied manner, the organisation’s perception of itself and its environment.” (Schein, 1990, pp.2).

Traditional qualitative methods that necessitate observation over extended periods of time are impractical (Denison, 1990). According to Kopelman, Brief, and Guzzo (1990), culture is a collective phenomenon, and they, add that individuals who are members of the same culture think and behave in similar fashions (Denison, 1990).

Campbell (2004) posits that organisational culture is expressed by the perceptible behaviour of the organisation.

According to Arnold (2005, p.625). “organisational culture is the distinctive norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that combine to give each organisation its distinct character”.

2.3 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

According to Champoux (2010), organisational culture involves attaining authentication as a predictive and elucidatory model in organisational studies. Champoux (2010) further proposes that organisational culture is a both a profound and intricate component of organisations and can have a substantial influence on members of the organisation. (Alvesson) contends that studies relating to organisational culture have been conducted since the 1940s. According to Alvesson (2002), culture is a somewhat integrated arrangement of denotations and representations within the requisite of which social interaction ensues.

The notion of organisational culture has its foremost origins in the culture theory. The following are some of the most widespread publications in the field of cultural studies: Alvesson (2002), Chhokar, Brodbeck, and House (2007), Denison, Haaland, and Goelzer (2004), Hatch (1993); Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohavy, and Sanders (1990), and House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004). These pivotal works deal with the various dimensions of societal and organisational culture (Dauber, 2012).

The works by Ouchi (1981), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Schein (1985) , Peters and Waterman (2006) and played a major role in the recognition of the theory of organisational culture. When one studies the various notions of organisational culture by Deal and Kennedy (1982), it is evident that they suggest that a strong organisational culture is one that exhibits strength, cohesiveness and awareness of organisational commitment and identity between the various groups in the organisation.

Hofstede (1993), Neuijen, Ohavy, and Sanders (1990) describe organisational culture as the values and beliefs people share in an organisation. These common organisational practices are moulded by the values of the leaders of the organisation by means of the socialisation of new employees, in addition to choosing individuals who fit into the culture of the organisation.

According to Maxwell and Cole (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010, p. 96), “cross-sectional research will often provide little insight into how a variable will change over time and may quite often lead to inaccurate conclusions” . Because organisational culture is a comparatively new field of research, the majority of models have been unable to chart organisational culture change over time by considering other organisational constructs such as strategy or structure, as well as existing empirical findings from other related disciplines.

The role of organisational culture is crucial to understanding organisational behaviour (Manetje & Martins, 2009). It is these standards and norms of organisational culture that prescribe how employees should behave in any given organisation. Global research indicates that organisational cultures create high levels of communication (Martins & Martins 2003, p.380).

Dauber (2012) and Smith and Lewis (2011) emphasise that the current theories of management and organisations are not able to fully apprehend organisational dynamics or change. Ployhart and Vandenberg (in Dauber, 2012) correspondingly highlight the need to consider time and change in emerging models, in order to study the intrinsic consequence of change over time for the underlying relationships between the two concepts.

A common thread running through the above definitions and explanations is the notion that in order to be successful, an organisation needs to be mindful of its culture. Ouchi (1981) maintains that culture is a mechanism in establishing supportive relationships at work.

2.4 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

According to the literature, organisational climate has always preceded the notion of organisational culture (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2013). Likewise, organisational climate is a significant reflection of how one can perceive human behaviour in a given organisation (Woodman & King, 1978; Ashforth, 1985; Shammari, 1992; Tustin, 1993; Glission & James, 2002; Allen, 2003; Al- Cotton, 2004;)

According to Denison (1990), organisational culture and climate have parallels and variances. Denison (2000,p.292) goes on to say that both perspectives observe the expansive explanation of the phenomenon as “the internal social psychological environment of organisations and the relationship of that environment to individual meaning and organisational adaptation”.

Culture researchers have been more involved with the advancement of the internal social psychological environment of organisations over time (Pettigrew,1979). Some organisational climate researchers have focused more on the impact of organisational environments on groups and individuals (Ekvall, 1978;Joyce & Slocum,1984; Koys & DeCotiis,1991), while others have placed more importance on “observable”practices and procedures that are closer to collective behaviour in organisations. The observation of the organisational climate enables individuals to understand both the similarities and differences.

According to Denison (1993), the most meaningful differences concerning culture and climate emerge in the literature from those theories that have developed from other branches of the social sciences, and which interpret the occurrence of the data as opposed to the nature of the phenomenon.

2.5 MODELS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

There are many models of organisational culture in the literature that highlight different aspects and levels of organisational culture. Some of these will now be discussed in order to explore the definitions in more depth and determine the different dimensions of the concept.

2.5.1 Schein’s model of levels of culture

Schein (1990, 1992), described, from a social psychology perspective, the culture of an organisation as being the profoundly entrenched levels of basic notions and principles that are shared between the individuals of an organisation. These operate instinctively, and describe, in an inferred way, the organisation’s perception of itself and its environment.

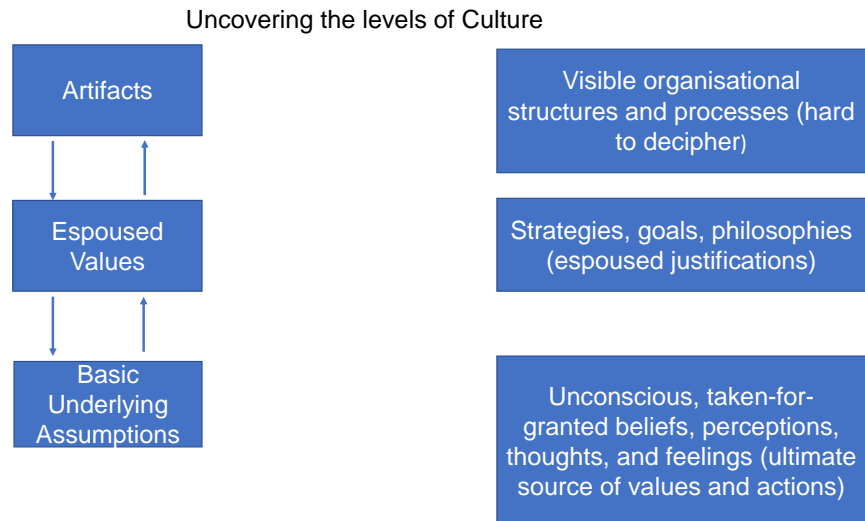


Figure 2.1. Levels of Culture and their Interaction

Source: Schein, 1985, p. 14

As illustrated in figure 2.1, Schein (1985) defines culture on three levels. The term “level” refers to the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer.

- 1) *Artefacts*. These include everything that one sees, hears and feels when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture. These artefacts are often easy to observe but not as easy to decipher. According to Schein (1985), this visible behaviour impacts and is impacted by unobservable theories that are determined by rules, standards and exclusions of the group. These can be explained as the physical environment in which the group operates, its language, technology and products, and style, the manner of address used by the group, and its observable rituals and ceremonies.

Beliefs and values. Fundamentally, when an individual is initially faced with a new task, problem or issue, the first solution proposed will reflect some of the individual’s own assumptions about what is right or wrong. It is only after the group has taken some joint action and together observed the outcome of the action, that they have a shared knowledge. According to Schein (1985), beliefs and values at this conscious level will predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at the artefact level. However, if those beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, they will

reflect what people say in a variety of situations, which may not concur with what they actually do.

- 2) *Underlying assumptions.* Culture defines for us as individuals what things mean, how we react emotionally to circumstances and what actions, if any, are then required (Schein, 2004). On the one hand, once this set of assumptions has been attained, we tend to be comfortable with other individuals who share the same set of assumptions. On the other, we are uncomfortable in situations in which there are differing basic assumptions.

2.5.2 Hatch's cultural dynamic model

Hatch (1993) observed that Schein's model lacked an adequate explanation of the processes between the artefacts, values and assumptions, and added a fourth dimension, namely symbols. Hatch (1993) expanded Schein's cultural dynamics model (view Section 2.5.1:Figure 2.1) into one comprising four concepts, namely assumptions, artefacts, values and symbols. Furthermore, Hatch (1993) suggested that the relationship between assumptions, artefacts, values and symbols was cyclical and not layered, as proposed by Schein (1985).

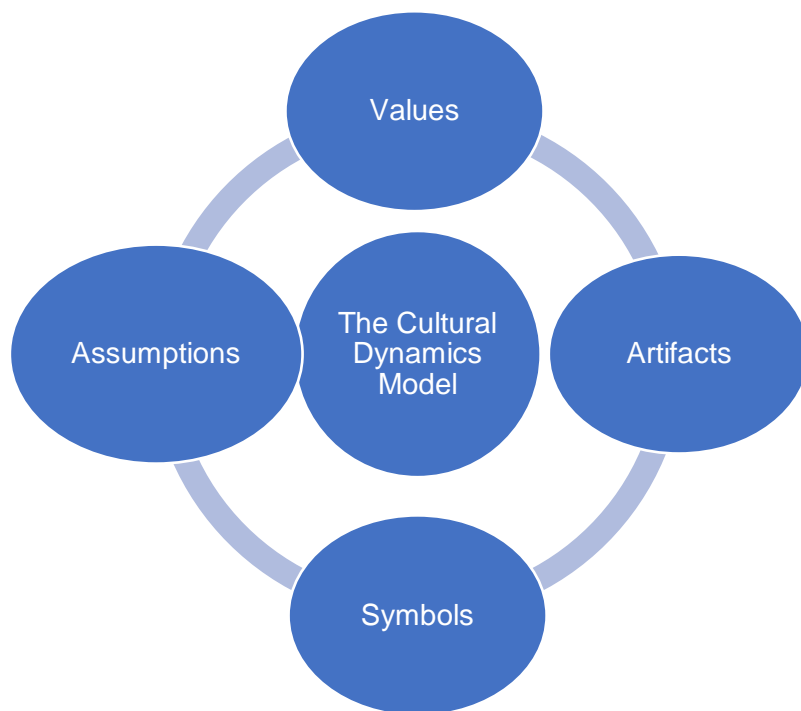


Figure 2.2. The Cultural Dynamics Model

Source: Hatch, 1993, p. 660

Symbols. These explain the processes that connect each element of organisational culture, therefore providing a better comprehension of interdependencies (Dauber, 2012). Hatch (1993) assumes that there are two possible ways in which observable behaviour emerges. These are through the underlying assumptions and the manifestation of values and realisation, or of artefacts and interpretation into symbols, and through these symbols into artefacts. Schein's and Hatch's models respectively are compared in figure 2.3.

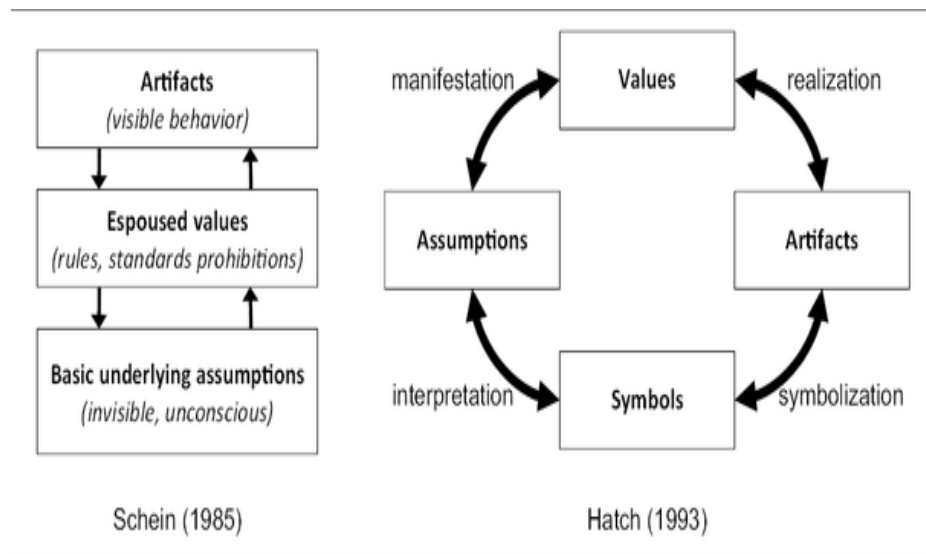


Figure 2.3. Organisational Culture Models differentiating between Schein's, 1985 model and Hatch's 1993 model.

Source: Schein (1985) and Hatch (1993)

According to Dauber (2012), however it is still unclear what circumstances or processes are involved, or what factors determine the path for the transformation of assumptions into artefacts (Dauber, 2012).

2.5.3 Martins' organisational culture model

Martins' (1989) organisational model is based on the work of Schein (1985) and extended his original model.

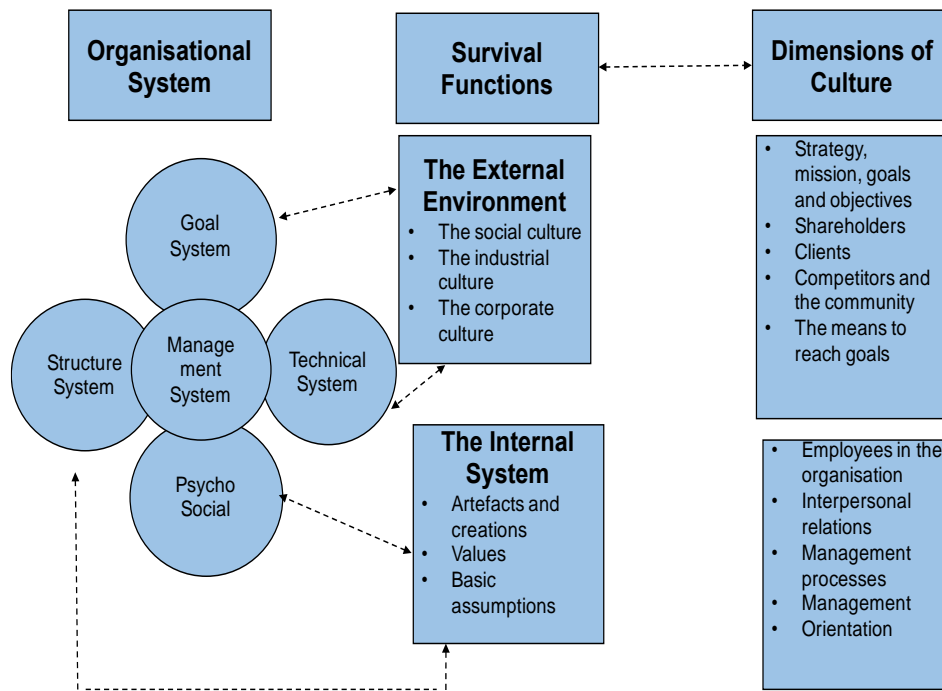


Figure 2.4. Martins' Organisational Culture Model

Source: Martins, 1989, p. 92

The above figure depicts the interaction between three fundamental elements, namely the organisational subsystems, the survival functions and the dimensions of culture (Luthans , 2010).

The five subsystems comprising the greater organisational system are as follows:

- 1) *Goals and value subsystem.* These are the frequently associated intentions linked to the mission and strategy of the organisation.
- 2) *Technical subsystem.* This system involves the particular proficiencies and apparatus used to transform inputs to outputs.
- 3) *Structural subsystem.* This involves the task beliefs and technology that have a meaningful bearing on the make-up of an organisation.
- 4) *Psychosociological subsystem.* This comprises the individuals and groups within the organisation and the relationships between these various groups and their motivation to attain the common goals that have been established by members of an organisation.
- 5) *Management subsystem.* This denotes the manner in which the organisation associates itself with the environment (Luthans , 2010).

As a result of this interaction between, and the mutual effect on one another, the diverse subsystems, a distinctive culture is fashioned in every organisation, thereby differentiating it from all other organisations (Martins, 1989). Manetje and Martins (2009) conclude that most appropriate and applicable definition of organisational culture is that of Harrison (1993:11), namely that it is “the distinctive constellation of beliefs, values, work styles, and relationships that distinguish one organisation from another”. In other words, organisational culture comprises the traits that give an organisation its specific feel.

Martins (2004) considered three perspectives of organisational culture, namely integration, differentiation and fragmentation. Integration is constructed on the belief that there is one dominant culture within an organisation. Conversely, differentiation is the belief that organisations are constructed on the diverse subcultures that exist within them (Martins, 2004).

According to Martins (2004), fragmentation emphasises the existence of ambiguity within organisations. Martins (2004) asserts that organisational culture can be considered by using various elements of deliberation. It is as a result of this interaction and the mutual effect between the diverse subsystems, that a distinctive culture is fashioned within every organisation, thereby differentiating it from all other organisations (Martins, 1989).

The survival function of a system comprises the following two main elements:

- 1) The external environment, refers to the survival of an organisation in the external environment, and the structure, goals and values, as well as the technological subsystem (Martins, 1989).
- 2) The internal environment, refers to the survival of the organisation in the internal environment and relates to the structural, psychosociological and technological subsystems (Martins, 1989).

2.5.4 Hofstede's model of organisational culture

Further models of organisational culture, such as that of Hofstede (1990) have also been recognised as meaningful.

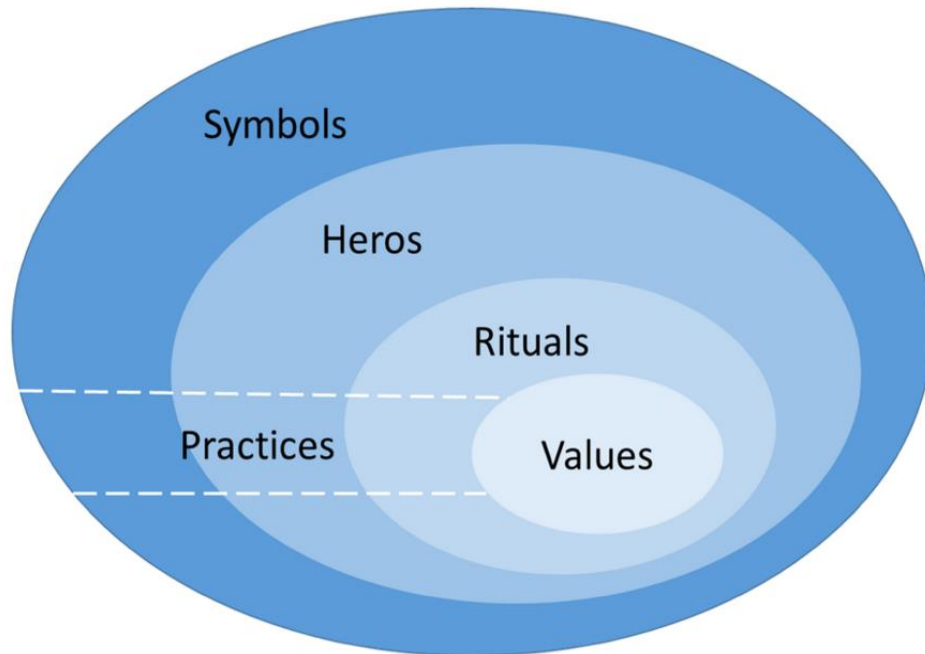


Figure 2.5. Hofstede's Manifestation of Culture

Source: Shallow to Deep (Hofstede, MNeuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990, p. 291)

The theory of Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework centres around cross-cultural communication. In figure 2.5, Hofstede distinguishes between values, rituals, heroes and symbols, which from inside to outside have a shorter life cycle. The values are described as the core of the culture, while the rituals are the collective activities that are deemed essential in a culture. Heroes, unlike values and rituals, are defined as those individuals who possess characteristics that are highly regarded by the culture and serve as models for behaviour.

The symbols are the words and gestures which have a particular meaning for those who share a culture, and represent the words, actions and depictions that exemplify specific associations within the culture, and are ordinarily recognised by the shared culture (Ehlers, Helmstedt, & Richter, 2010).

2.6 DIMENSIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Based on the models above, a number of different dimensions can be identified. Schein (1992) asserted that there are five dimensions of organisational culture, which relate to the adaptation of an organisation and help to identify the deeper facets of organisational culture.

Appraising an organisation on the characteristics noted below, provides an overall picture of the culture of the organisation in terms of how things are done and the manner in which its members are supposed to behave.

- *Mission and strategy.* This is the shared understanding of the primary tasks of an organisation.
- *Goals.* General accord about goals is ascertained from the definition of the mission.
- *Means.* These relate to the basic foundations such as the structure of the organisation, the authority matrix and the system pertaining to recognition and reward.
- *Measurement.* This is the process whereby the organisation sets the parameters for determining how the group is meeting the set goals.
- *Correction.* This involves the measures that are taken to correct errors. Measures are implemented if the formulated goals have not been met.
- *Creating a common language.* If there is no communication and understanding, there will be no cohesiveness between the members of the group.
- *Defining group boundaries.* The group itself is responsible for the creation of the norms for group membership.
- *Distribution of power and status.* The group must obtain consensus with regard to the hierarchy, and the rubrics that direct how an individual acquires, sustains and renounces power.
- *Development of norms.* Consensus must be ascertained on relationships between colleagues.
- *Defining rewards and punishment.* This involves limitations of the group conduct, and accord on reward and punishment.

- *Explaining the inexplicable.* At some stage, all groups will confront something that is inexplicable with regard to ideology and religion. Such occurrences should be given meaning and assistance provided to the group to enable them to understand how to deal with the inexplicable (Luthans, 2012).

Luthans and Doh (2012) defined the following significant distinguishing factors which are related to the dimensions of culture, and that are frequently associated with the culture of an organisation are:

- *Organisational climate.* This is illustrated by the manner in which business is performed and in which group members are regarded by their peers and seniors. The following cultural dimensions were of significance in the current study:
 - Vision and mission. These need to be understood by various individuals, and through the process of AI, an awareness is created of how these can be transformed into a quantifiable objective on which to build the culture of the merged organisations.
 - Means to achieve objectives. The manner in which an organisation builds the support mechanisms was referred to in the current study as co-ordination in order to make a meaningful contribution to the effectiveness of the organisation.
- *Dealing with clients.* The manner in which clients are dealt with was significant in this study.
- *Central values.* These include facets of efficiency, proficiency and concern for quality.
- *Norms.* These are gauged by the extent of work to be completed and the intensity of cooperation among the management and employees of an organisation.
- *Establishment of clear rules.* These include setting the norms of employee behaviours, intergroup collaboration and interactions with customers.
- *Setting of observed behavioural regularities.* These are demonstrated by common language and formal procedures within the organisation.

These approaches and models propose a set of cultural dimensions along which dominant value systems can be ordered. It is systems such as these that affect human thinking, feeling and acting, and the behaviour of organisations and institutions in predictable ways. These dimensions reflect the basic problems that any society has to cope with, but for which solutions differ. They are similar in some respects but different in others (Anbari)

2.7 THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Organisational culture is important for many reasons such as its connection to effectiveness (Ahmed, 1998; Denison, 1990) and its contribution to maintaining a strategic competitive advantage (Lado & Wilson, 1994; Martins & Martins, 2003). Organisational culture can be regarded as an advantage when it steers the behaviour of the people working in an organisation in the right direction. In today's rapidly changing world, organisations are faced with issues such as globalisation, advanced information technology and intense competition that sometimes compel organisations to downsize, delay and outsource (Baruch, 1999, 2003; Davis, 1995; Goffee & Jones, 1998; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002).

Luthans (2010) emphasises the significance and differing perspectives on culture in an organisation. When an individual becomes acquainted with an organisation, he or she inherits the dress norms, the stories people tell about what goes on, the formal rules and procedures of the organisation, rituals, tasks, pay systems, jargon and jokes only understood by insiders, which describe some of the components of the expressions of organisational culture (Luthans, 2011).

When cultural members interpret the meanings of the expressions, their perceptions, beliefs, experiences and values intend to be in contrast and their interpretations thus differ. The patterns of configurations of these interpretations and the ways they are enacted, constitute culture (Luthans, 2011).

According to Luthans (2010), the following are some of the principal organisational characteristics:

- observed behavioural regularities when organisational participants interact they use common language, terminology and rituals relating to deference and demeanour
- norms or standards of behaviour that exist, including guidelines on how much work to do
- dominant values or the major values that the organisation advocates and expects the participants to share
- philosophies and policies that are set regarding the organisation's beliefs about how employees and/or customers should be treated
- rules or the strict guidelines on working harmoniously in an organisation
- organisational climate or the overall feeling conveyed by the physical layout, the way the participants interact and the way in which the members conduct themselves with customers or outsiders

According to these rules or norms, everyone in the organisation should share this perception. However, all may not do so. This results in the formation of a dominant culture as well as subcultures throughout an organisation (Luthans, 2011, p.73).

According to Ott (1989), organisational culture is a social force that controls patterns of organisational behaviour by shaping members' cognitions and perceptions of meanings and realities. It provides affective energy for mobilising and identifying who belongs and who does not, and states that individuals are a vital part of the organisation's culture. Hatch (1993) suggests that organisational culture encompasses all members of the organisation and originates and develops at all hierarchical levels of the organisation. Davies and Philip (1994) state that organisational culture is important to organisational efficacy and is a determinant of the organisation's success.

Organisational culture provides a sense of commitment to something that is larger than the individual self-interest by providing appropriate standards for what employees say and do (Martins & Martins, 2003). In addition, a strong organisational culture facilitates the organisational processes of regulation and control, and provides members with agreed norms of behaviour and rules, that enable them to reach consensus (Brown, 1998). According to Jung, Tobias and Scott, Tim and Davies, Huw and Bower, Peter and Whalley, Diane and McNally, Rosalind and Mannion, Russell,

2009), organisational culture is critical to organisational efficacy. It is therefore imperative for the managers and leaders in the organisation to understand, monitor and manage the culture of the organisation. Organisational culture also helps new employees to learn the customs of the organisation, which boosts their confidence and thus promotes effective decision making.

Many studies in the literature such as those of Hatch (1993), Mohr (1982), Rohlen (1974) and Van Maanen, (1979) have shown that a strong organisational culture promotes job satisfaction, which is affected by many factors such as the personality of employees, their values, their expectations of the job and the opportunities provided by the company. Organisational culture is absolutely essential for an organisation to remain competitive in the market (Luthans, 2011, p. 83).

Davis(1995), deems organisational culture to directly affect the strategy in an organisation. Brown (1998) describes the following five ways in which organisational culture affects strategy formulation

- 1) It acts as a perception filter.
- 2) It affects the interpretation of information.
- 3) It sets moral and ethical standards.
- 4) It approves rules, norms and heuristics for action.
- 5) It's culture influences the way in which power and authority are wielded in reaching consensus on what course of action to take.

The above being said, it should be remembered that a strong culture can also be a liability to an organisation, especially when you need to change the culture, or after a merger or acquisition when cultures are not compatible (Robbins, Judge, Oden-daal & Roodt, 2009).

The above discussion underscores the significance of organisational culture in engaging and retaining valuable employees. It is one of the major components that leaders can employ to sustain performance, build emotional connect and maintain.

A competitive advantage, which explains why it is considered a fundamental business strategy. Because of the crucial role organisational culture plays in organisations, it is deemed a valuable asset and a key driver for employees.

2.8 THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGING OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The course of culture formation, according to Schein (2004), can be associated with the course of group formation as the group identity results in shared assumptions that can be referred to as the culture of that group. Schein (2004) further argues that culture develops from three sources, namely the beliefs, values and assumptions of the founders of the organisation; the learning experiences of the group members as the organisation develops; and lastly the new beliefs, values and assumptions that develop as new group members and leaders are brought into the organisation.

It is therefore evident from the above findings in the literature that in order to maintain its competitiveness, an organisation must be able to readily adapt its culture, because it is this culture that draws the members of an organisation closer together thus creates a sense of cohesion.

2.8.1 The development of organisational culture

According to Schein (1999), the beliefs, values and assumptions of the founders of the organisation, combined with the learning experiences of the group members, are what contribute to the formation of a new culture.

Schein (1999) contends that organisational maturation can be divided into the following three phases:

- 1) the founding and development stage
- 2) organisational midlife
- 3) organisational maturity and decline

Maturation can be accomplished by the collective experiences of individuals over a period of time, which sequentially lead to agreed values and modes of behaviour (Schein, 1999). Ahmed (1998) posits that as the organisation develops, individual employees learn how to solve its problems, this also results in shared ways of doing things.

It is the founder who decides on the mission of the organisation, the environment in which the organisation operates and who the initial group members are (Luthans, 2012). Most large organisations have a dominant culture as well as numerous subcultures (Alvesson, 1998). According to Trice and Beyer (1993), subcultures develop differential interaction, shared experiences, similar personal characteristics and cohesion. Brown (1998) contends that a successful organisation needs to have the ability to overcome the barriers that may transpire amid the diverse subcultures.

According to Luthans (2008), p. 75), organisational culture can begin in various ways, but the process usually follows some if not all of the following steps:

- A single person has an idea for a new enterprise.
- This person brings in one or more key people and creates a core group that shares a common vision with this individual or founder .
- The founding core group begins starts to create a organisation by raising funds, obtaining patents, locating office space, and so on.
- At this point, other individuals are brought on board, and a common history starts to be built (Luthans, 2012, p. 75).

Once an organisational culture is underway and commences its development, there are numerous practices that can promote the recognition of core values and reinforce the idea of the culture sustaining itself. These practices can be explained in terms of the following socialisation steps:

- 1) *Selection of entry level personnel.* The preliminary phase is the careful selection of entry-level candidates. Usually these candidates display the specific traits linked to effective performance that fit in with the organisation's culture (Luthans, 2012,p.77).
- 2) *Placement on the job.* The second step ensues on the job itself after the person with the correct fit has been hired. These individuals contend with different happenstances, which are carefully coordinated to trigger the individual to question the organisation's norms and values and decide whether or not he or she can accept them (Luthans, 2012, p.78).

- 3) *Job mastery.* After the preliminary cultural shock is over, the individual grasps the job expectations through extensive and reinforced field experience (Luthans, 2012, p.77).
- 4) *Measuring and rewarding performance.* Following this stage, the operational results and individual's performance are measured and rewarded accordingly. These systems are comprehensive and consistent and focus on those aspects of the business that are most crucial for competitive success and corporate values (Luthans, 2012,p.78).
- 5) *Adherence to important values.* Identification with the organisation's values helps employees to reconcile personal sacrifices brought about by membership of the organisation. Pascale (Winter, 1985) states the following in this regard, "Placing oneself at the mercy of an organisation imposes real costs". This may include long hours of work, missed weekends, bosses whom one has to endure. Nowadays, organisations functioning in a worldwide economy have the prerequisite of paying extraordinary consideration to cultural disparities across the world (Luthans, 2012, p. 78).
- 6) *Reinforcement of stories.* This step involves maintenance of the organisation's culture and approach to operational ideologies. This explains why an organisation performs in a certain manner (Luthans, 2012,p. 79).
- 7) *Recognition and promotion.* The final step is the acknowledgement and advancement of individuals who have performed well and can behave as role models to new people in the organisation (Luthans, 2012,p.79).

Rajecki (1990) argues that most of the early researchers had a limited vision of attitudes. Accordingly, he confirms that attitudes consist of the following three components: A is the cognitive component that represents all information gathered from different sources towards something which is the base of thinking and believing; B is the affective component that represents the like or dislike process towards the same thing, which is based on the information gathered cognitive component; and C is the behavioural component, which represents the set of either positive or negative actions towards that thing. However, Luthans (2012) believes that among the three components of attitudes, only the behavioural component can be directly observed, while the rest are unseen.

2.8.2 Changing an organisational culture

Changing an organisational culture may occur at a time when the environmental situation has endured radical transformation and the organisation has to acclimatise to these new conditions or it may not survive (Luthans, 2012,p.79). Nowadays, organisations demand a culture that can foresee transformation with new product development and advanced information technology (Luthans, 2012,p.79). Shifting to an innovative culture or changing can be enormously problematic for an organisation.

Changing a culture after a merger or acquisition

Owing to discrepancies in stock market values concerning organisations, globalisation and the recent financial crisis, mergers and acquisitions have created a climate for either friendly or hostile take-overs (Zaccaro and Banks ,2004).

Politics informs where the power and managerial decision making really reside. Corporate cultures vary from autocratic boundaries to total employee empowerment, and how this plays out among the partners is important to cultural compatibility (Luthans, 2011, p.80). According to Zaccaro and Banks (2004) modern organisations have to continuously adapt to the demands of greater turbulence, volatility and complexity – hence the need for managers at all organisational levels to be innovative and creative in developing solutions.

All these changes are putting considerable pressure on organisations to find ways to be more competitive, sometimes even internationally. This competition brings with it the need for organisations to do more with less (Schreuder & Theron, 2001), respond to the increasing demands of customers (Causon, 2004), or as Furnham (2000, p. 243) puts it, “a need for greater speed of reaction and closer focus on its core business”. Zaccaro and Banks (2004) concur, and state that in order to enhance competitive advantage, managers and leaders need to promote greater strategic flexibility across and within their organisations.

The “new” organisation focuses on self-directed work teams, flatter organisational structures, larger spans of reporting, the so-called “learning organisation” concept,

employee participation and empowerment (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). South Africa specifically also faces a number of challenges that underscore the importance of change and the need for organisations to adapt to these situations. The labour market faces many challenges, mostly because of the history of this country in terms of the apartheid era. There has been a major change in the composition of the workforce since the 1994 democratic election (Schreuder & Theron, 2001).

According to Kondakci, Yasar and Caliskan and Omer.(2010) organisational change is typically triggered by a relevant environmental shift that, once sensed by the organisation, leads to an intentionally generated response". This intentional response is planned change and consists of the following four identifiable, interrelated components:

- change intervention that alters
- key organisational target variables that have an impact on
- individual organisational members and their on-the-job behaviours, resulting in changes in
- organisational outcomes.

Guidelines on change

Kurt Lewin as cited in (French & Bell, 1989) conceptualised change as a three-phase model (view Figure 2.7), namely unfreezing the old behaviour, moving to a new level of behaviour, and then refreezing the behaviour at the desired new level. According to Schein's model (Schein, 2004), the three phases of change are unfreezing/disconfirmation, cognitive restructuring and refreezing.

- 1) *Unfreezing/disconfirmation.* Transformational change implies that the person or group that is the target of change must unlearn something as well as learn something new. To encourage people to change, it is necessary to create enough disequilibrium to force a coping process and thus a motivation to change (Schein, 1999).
- 2) *Cognitive restructuring.* Once an organisation has been unfrozen, the change process proceeds by either new learning or imitating role models.

view In either case, the essence of the new learning (Schein, 1999) is usually some cognitive redefinition of some of the core concepts in the assumptions set.

- 3) *Refreezing*. During the refreezing process, the new behaviours are reinforced. New beliefs and values gradually stabilise, become internalised and are eventually taken for granted. Once new disconfirmations start again, the whole change process starts all over again (Schein, 1999).

A culture of persistent inquiring seems to be an effectual point to commence cultural change, but there is also a requirement to go outside such particular parameters and focus on a more comprehensive approach to change. The term “change management” is aptly described by Moran and Brightman (2001,p. 115) as “the process of continually renewing an organisations direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever changing needs of external and internal customers” (*Science Direct*, 2016). Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) concur that change is not contingent on the age and size of an organisation, but transpires in all businesses.

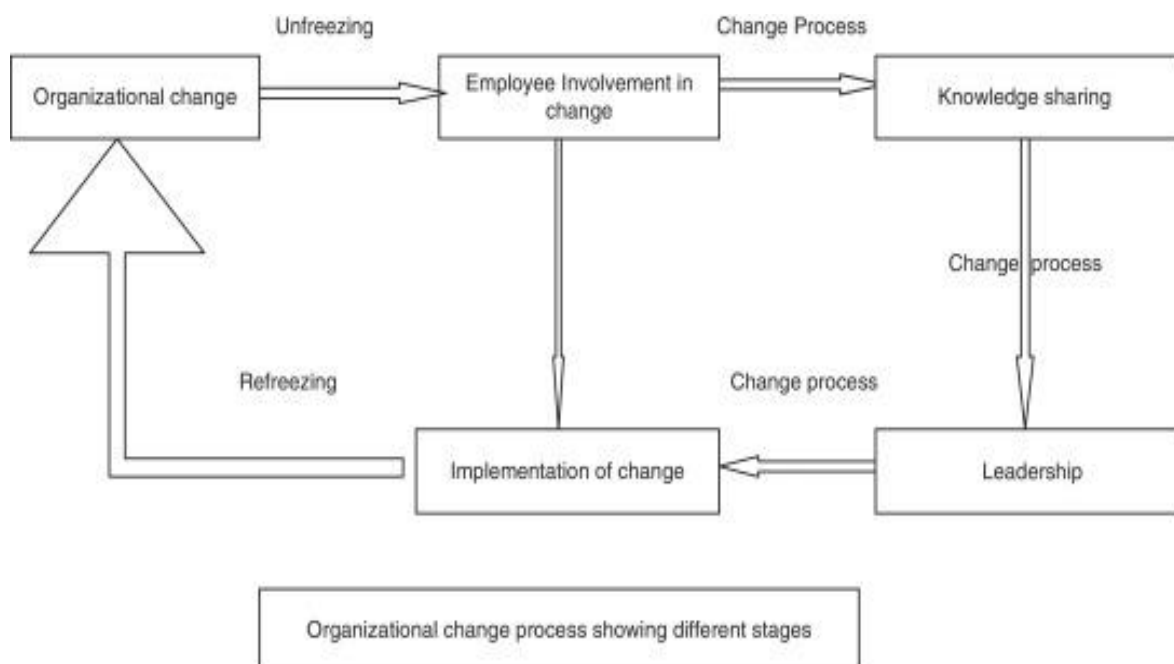


Figure 2.6. Model of Organisational Change Showing Lewin's Three-step model
Source: Luthans, 2012

The notions that create a perception that change is needed are explained in figure 2.6. Once change has been effected, enabling the organisation to move forward to the new, more desired level, the final stage of refreezing, the new behaviour is then reset as the norm.

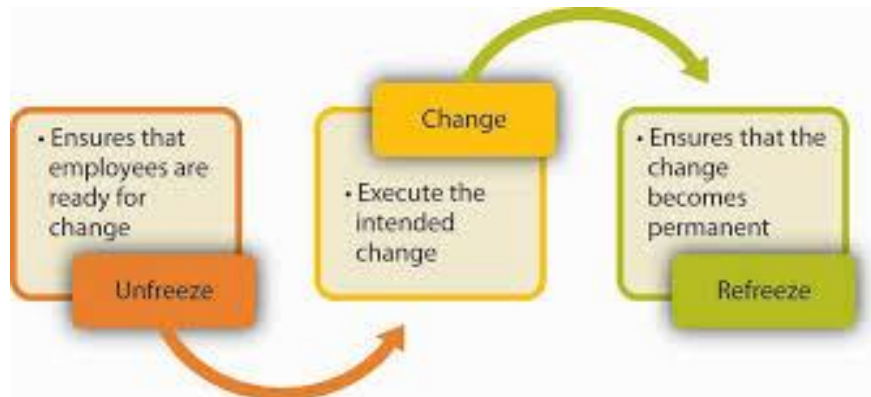


Figure 2.7. Detailed Depiction of Figure 2.6

Source: Author summarised (adopted and adapted from the work of Lewin and Schein).

According to Wenger (1999), employees influence the change process by initially sharing knowledge. This knowledge generates the value of an organisation and contributes the mechanism for the knowledge base of the organisation. In order to implement change, the organisation must be guided by an influential leader. According to Northouse (2004) leadership “a process by which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve common goals”.

Cummings and Worley (2003) describe the following five actions required in leadership during a change process:

- 1) motivating change
- 2) creating a vision
- 3) developing political support
- 4) managing the transition
- 5) sustaining momentum

According to Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky (2005), two factors contribute towards a successful transition. The first is the employee's resistance to change, and

second the employee's openness to change. Laura and Stephen (2002,p.67) however contend that "leadership also involves implementing change through developing a base of followers, motivating them to commit to work hard in pursuit of change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change".

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the concept of organisational culture and its impact on organisational development in the case of the merging different organisational cultures, and examined a few of the techniques used to describe and hypothesise organisational culture. Organisational culture was defined from both a historical and the current perspective. The differences between organisational culture and climate were discussed. Various models of organisational culture were explained, together with the dimensions of organisational culture. The changing of an organisation's culture was then discussed within the realms of mergers and acquisitions.

CHAPTER 3

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, AI is defined and the history and purpose thereof discussed. The principles and assumptions of AI are examined, and the AI process, cycle, applications and use as a change management intervention discussed. The rationale of this chapter is to provide the reader with information on AI and the AI process.

3.2 DEFINING AI

Appreciation is recognition, valuing and gratitude. The verb, "appreciate" refers to both the act of recognition and of enhancing value (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Having the status or the ability to appreciate, value and recognise the best in the world around us means comprehending those phenomena that give life to living systems.

Inquiry refers to the acts of exploration and discovery. The verb 'inquire' means to ask questions, study, search, delve into or investigate (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010)

In their analysis of the literature, Bushe and Kassam (2005, p.163) found two specific claims that differentiate AI from other standard organisational development (OD) interventions.

- AI results in new knowledge, models and theories.
- AI results in a generative metaphor that compels new action.

According to Cooperrider (2005), AI involves the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations and the pertinent world about them. AI is distinctive in the discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most alive, most effective and beneficial in economic, ecological and human terms (Cooperrider, 2005). AI was developed as a method to encourage social innovation by involving people in discovering the 'best of what is'.

AI strengthens a system's capability to understand itself, and inquires into and benchmarks the high points, lived values, traditions and strategic competencies of the organisation into the deeper corporate visions of treasured and achievable potential (Cooperrider, 2005). AI is based on the assumption that every organisation or system has to some degree a phenomenon that works properly and pertains to the processes and issues that give the organisation life when it is most alive and successful (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The type of discovery phase question that would generate more awareness, would inspire the individual to talk about the most thought-provoking experience they have had during the culture transformation process (Bushe, 2013). AI is a process that inquiries into, identifies and further develops the best of what is in organisations in order to create a better future (Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003, p. 5).

The approach works by focusing on the positive and collectively constructing ways of building and contributing to the strength-based development of the organisation. A central supposition of AI, according to Cooperrider (2005, p. 27), is 'that organisations move toward what they study'. The AI approach is not an immediate solution that corrects the deficits within the organisation, but rather introduces a method that incorporates the entire organisation into what is termed a "whole system event" (Reed, 2007).

Furthermore, AI is described as "social construction in action" (McNamee in Reed 2007, p. viii). This assertion reflects the central role ascribed to the function of the social construction within the approach. "Constructionism proposes that the most important aspect of social life is what people do together, because in their joint actions people create a world that values certain beliefs and practices" (McNamee, 2003, p. 23). In other words, the meaning given to particular representations of people, objects and phenomena informs our experience of these people, objects and phenomena, which are then shared through a shared language that aids the construction of reality (Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004; Valsiner, 2006; Van Sant, 1989).

Reed (2007) postulates that AI is a form of social construction in action, focused specifically on social relationships and human interaction, whereby new knowledge

can be generated to promote a better understanding of the social world, while transforming communities, programmes, organisations and individuals.

AI is a style of positive change, founded on the “art of the question”, and the proficiency of constructing an unconditionally positive question. AI is founded on established principles, that follow an established practice and purpose.

AI therefore seeks out the best of what is, to help ignite the collective imagination of what might be, with the aim of generating a new knowledge of a collectively desired future. This helps translate images into possibilities, intentions into realities and beliefs into practice (Cooperrider, 2005).

3.2.1 The history and purpose of AI

According to Whitney and Trostren-Blom (2003), AI is a method of action research which originated in the United States of America (USA) during the 1980s. The concept developed from the exploratory work of David Cooperrider and his colleagues at the Case Western Reserve University for the doctoral programme in organisational behaviour, which was introduced in 1960 by Herb Shephard, and the work of the Taos Institute (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 8; Reed, 2007, p.2). The Taos Institute is acknowledged for its work in numerous organisations and educators in diverse social fields (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p.18). The objective of Cooperrider's research was to advance a substantiated theory of participatory management (Coghlan et al., 2006).

AI has consequently been accepted as an intervention in the field of OD. According to Reed (2007, p.9), as one form of constructionism in action, AI suggests that “if we ask questions about problems, we create a reality of problems”. Reed (2007, p.11) goes on to say, “that on the other hand, if we ask questions about what works, what gives life to a community, group, or person, we participate in the construction of a reality of potential”.

Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987, p.129) contend that “research into the potential of organisational life should be collaborative”. This implies the presumed reality of an inextricable connection concerning the progression of the inquiry and its content. According to Susman and Evered (1978), a collaborative relationship between the

researcher and the organisation is absolutely essential. Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987) refer to the following principles:

- *Principle 1.* Research into the social innovation (potential) of organisational life should begin with appreciation. This means that the “appreciative approach takes its inspiration from the current state of what is and seeks an understanding of these forces hereby to heighten the total potential of an organisation” (Cooperrider & Srivastava, 1987, p.135).
- *Principle 2.* This relates to research into the social potential of organisational life.
- *Principle 3.* Research into the social potential of organisational life should be provocative.

Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987, p. 135) go on to say that the spirit underlying each of the above principles of AI “is to be found in one of the most ancient archetypes symbols of hope and inspiration”. The criticality of this assumption of AI is what drives the need for inclusivity in the process (Lewis & Van Tiem, 2004).

This principle of inclusivity describes why AI is cooperative and coevolutionary (Cooperrider & Srivastava, 1987; Cooperrider Whitney & Stavros, 2008 Jacobsgaard, 2003). As each participant contributes what he or she values about the organisation, the collective story of the organisation evolves to accommodate this latest contribution to its history and everyday life. According to Cooperrider et al. (2008), our shared imagination and dialogue within an organisation have interminable potential in terms of the influence they may have.

In preference to vindicating the past, AI supports the organisation in the construction and creation of new ideas, perceptions and metaphors in the promotion of enriched organisational culture transformation (Cooperrider & Srivastava, 1987). The powerful nature of these ideas establishes a number of distinctive methods for transformation. In a central way, AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. AI centrally involves the mobilisation of inquiry through the crafting of the unconditional positive question, often involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people (Cooperrider, 2005). In their analysis of the literature, Bushe and Kassam

(2005, p.163) identified two specific claims that differentiate AI from other standard OD interventions.

- 1) AI results in new knowledge, models and theories.
- 2) AI results in a generative metaphor that compels new action.

Gergen (1978, p. 1346) defines this generativity as the "capacity to challenge the directorial assumptions of the culture, to nurture central questions concerning present-day social life, to further re-evaluation of that which is 'taken for granted' and thus endow innovative substitutions for collective actions". The construction of this more generative discovery question allows individuals to deliberate other strategies to advance in the transformation of the organisation (Bushe, 2013). The lack of a generative emphasis causes the organisation to fail in the pursuit of the positive effect of the AI process (Bushe, 2013). The transformation indicated would be the variations in the uniqueness of the system, environment and the qualitative changes in the state of being of that system. Bushe (2013) voices the concern that current methodologies utilised by many AI consultants overstate the importance of "the positive stuff" and assign less importance to the generativity of the AI process.

The proficiencies of positive emotions extend an individual's transitory thought action repertoires, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Frederickson, 2001). It would appear that moments in people's lives are characterised by the experiences of positive emotions, and these are "moments that are not clouded by negative emotions" (Frederickson, 2001, p.303). Positive emotion states are worth cultivating as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved well-being over time (Fredrickson 2001). Achor (2010) supports Frederickson's research in postulating that individuals with a positive mind-set do have a greater generative capacity.

The roots of AI lie in OD, and as such, one of the aims of AI is to generate sustainable, positive change within the organisation. Cooperrider (2005) observed that by inquiring about what people value in their organisation, they express themselves unreservedly which means greater discernment regarding the assumptions and beliefs that underlie everyday practice. The history and purpose of AI can be seen as

one form of constructionism in action, working on the discovery of what gives life to a system by means of skilfully crafted positive questions.

The appreciative interview starts a dialogue to discover and dream a new, more compelling image of the organisation and its future (Cooperrider, 2007) he contends that an AI initiative is more than just a training programme. It is an opportunity to create an exciting and dynamic organisation. Dynamic is characterised by continuous change, which is imbued with vigour and energy. According to Cooperider (2007) many organisations have cocreated whole systems processes to

- create a common ground vision and strategy for the future
- accelerate organisational learning
- unite labour and management in new jointly envisioned partnerships
- create dialogue to foster shared meanings
- improve communications
- strengthen implementations of major information technology changes
- work towards sustainability
- demonstrate positive intent and trust with stakeholders
- build dynamic relationships and high performance teams to facilitate change

Cooperrider (2007) asserts that AI is a proven paradigm for accelerating organisational learning and transformation. It can be used in any situation where the leaders and organisational members are committed to building positive, life-centred organisations.

The power of positive imagery is a key factor in the AI dialogue. The following six main areas of research support this premise (Cooperrider, 2007):

- 1) *The placebo effect.* This is a process in which projected images, as reflected in positive belief, ignite a healing response that can be as effective as conventional therapy or any other intervention.
- 2) *The Pygmalion effect.* On the basis of credible study, teachers are led to believe that some of their students possess exceptionally high potential,

while others do not. Teachers therefore have a positive image of some students and negative expectancy of others.

- 3) *The positive effect and learned helpfulness.* While still in the formative stages, early results on this issue suggest that positive imagery evokes positive emotions and moves people towards a choice for positive actions.
- 4) *Inner dialogue.* It is argued that all human systems exhibit a continuing “cinematographic show of visual imagery” that is best understood through the notion of inner dialogue. The AI dialogue creates guiding images of the future from the collective group, thereby enhancing the chances of 2:1 imagery prevailing in a group setting.
- 5) *Positive imagery as a dynamic force.* Fred Polak, a Dutch sociologist, argued that the positive image of the future is the single most important dynamic and explanatory vehicle for understanding cultural evolution. When there is a bright image of the future, people flourish.
- 6) *Metacognition and conscious evolution of positive images.* Metacognition is awareness of one’s own cognitive systems and knowledge and insight into its workings. The heliotropic principle states that human systems have and observable tendency to evolve and move in the direction of those positive images that are the brightest, boldest and most illuminating (Cooperrider, 2007)

In the depiction in figure 3.1 below, the underlying assumption is that all organisations strive to revert to a state of “normal”, which is neither positively nor negatively deviant.

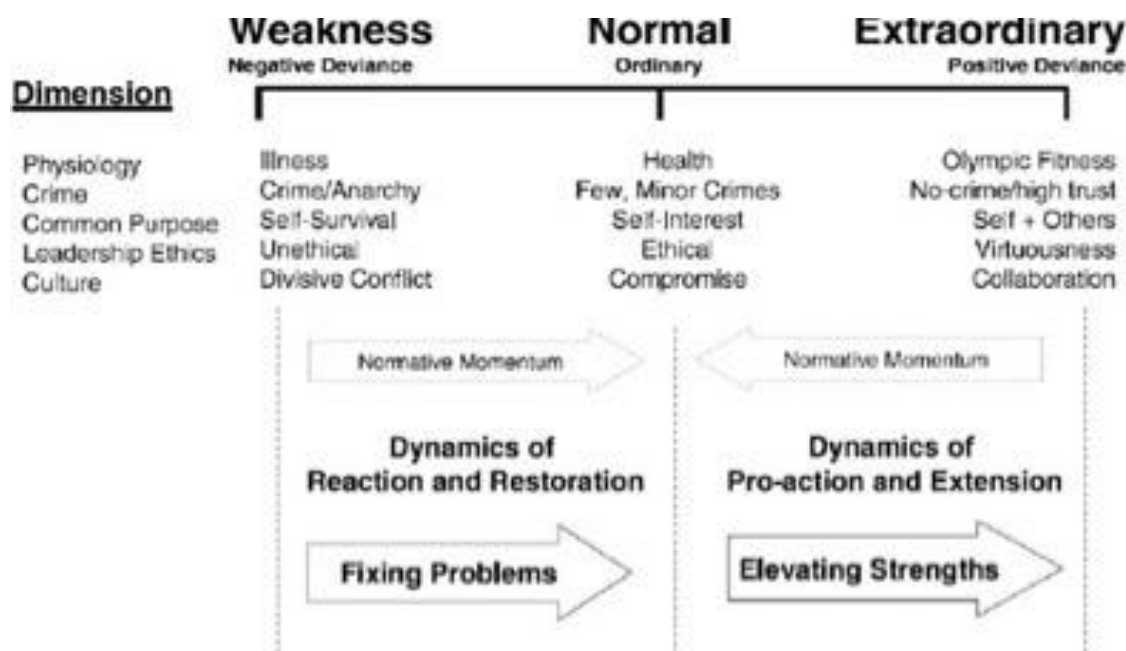


Figure 3.1. Depiction of the Normative Momentum in Organisational Development.
Source: Boyd & Bright, 2007, p.1019

3.2.2 The difference between AI and problem solving approaches

Gergen (2003) states that reality stems from that upon which we are focused. AI has the capacity to sanction change agents to support their clients to concentrate on the more positive activities in which they are engaged. This is in preference to the negatives in which they are entrenched.

The consequence of AI allows organisational events to be managed from a more exciting, fun and positive foundation. Quinn (1996) postulates that most recently, a number of scholars and practitioners have suggested that problem solving and the logical positivistic orientation impede the facilitation of lasting or deep change. They therefore advocate AI as an alternative method for facilitating change. AI is grounded on the assumption that something works or is going well in every “system” we encounter (Bushe, 1995; Hammond, 1999). AI fosters opportunities instead of problems when creating personal, organisational and societal change initiatives (Bushe, 1995). AI-based interventions offer change agents a way to help their “clients” identify, replicate and magnify the structures, systems or dynamics that are already working, instead of focusing on what is broken and how to fix it (Luechauer, 1999).

The *Appreciative inquiry handbook* (2003, pp. 20–21) explains negative discourse categories as follows:

- *Negative valuing.* This relates to any mention of negative valuing, such as, fatalism, apathy or dislike, or any description of person, group, circumstance or event as a problem or obstacle.
- *Concern, worry, preoccupation or doubt.* This concerns any mention of concern, worry and preoccupation without suggesting a possible model to alienate concern or enhance understanding; as well as any mention of doubt, suspicion or lack of confidence in future outcomes.
- *Negative valuing.* This relates to any mention of negative valuing, such as, fatalism, apathy or dislike, or any description of person, group, circumstance or event as a problem or obstacle.
- *Unfulfilled expectation.* This involves any mention of any event, action, state or person that does not match intention, wish, desire, goal or other unfulfilled expectation.
- *Lack of receptivity or absence of connection.* This refers to any mention of a lack of receptivity in self or others, including a lack of collaboration or understanding, a failure to listen or agree or any explicit mention of an absence of connection.
- *Deficiency in self or others.* This relates to any mention of a sense that something is missing, for example, a deficiency in self or others, and a lack of motivation, appropriate effort, skill or competence, or an absence of resources (such as time or money).
- *Negative effect.* This concerns any mention of feelings of dissatisfaction, selfishness, sadness, defensiveness, irritation or anger without mentioning a possible antidote or relief or effort to understand.
- *Withdrawal or suppression.* This involves any mention of avoidance, ignoring, withdrawal of energy or surrender, or suppressing self or others.
- *Control or domination.* This means any notice of effort or action to disrupt, dominate or wield control or halt a mood or action in self or other.
- *Wasted effort.* This entails any mention of excessive investment of time, resources or energy without mention of reward or positive outcome.

- *Prediction or image of a negative future.* This refers to any mention of prediction, vision, image or expectation of a negative future.
- *Attribution of control by others in combination with self-deprecation.* This relates to any notice of effort or action in others to disrupt, dominate or wield control in combination with attribution of helplessness to self or self-pity.
- *Negative cause-and-effect relation.* This refers to any explicit notice of a cause-and-effect relationship leading to a negative outcome.
- *Reframing a situation in negative terms.* This means any mention of a positive emotion with the possibility of a negative outcome, mention of a change in mood from positive to negative or getting into a negative state, focusing on possible obstacles or reframing a positive situation into more negative terms.
- *Positive focused development.* This is described as the process through which the strengths of the organisation are exposed.

Cooperrider and Srivasta (1984, p. 14) are remarkably articulate in echoing the views of critical inquirers (Arendt, Habermas, Friere, Meizow and Benhabid) when they state the following: This is “a totally different kind of rationality, one that acknowledges that everything we take to be good, or beautiful, or ‘true’ is the result of the socius or the social relationships of which we are part. To be rational – in its highest form – would be to create spaces for all voices, free and open.”

Cooperrider and Srivastva (2014) refer to AI in the literature as the socially constructed nature of reality based on these beliefs. AI has expanded beyond OD to projects in schools, community organisations and development bodies (Grant, 2006) . AI is described as “affirmative” rather than ‘deficit-based” and “appreciative’ rather than ‘critical’ in its approach (Van der Haar & Hosking, 2004; Grant, 2007; Lewis et al., 2008; Van der haar & Hosking, 2004). Supported by questions and processes that bring out the strengths and competencies, AI researchers and consultants have adopted a positive lens to promote change (Vital, Bolland, & Cooperrider, 2008).

This can be contrasted with the deficit-based model, which begins with the assumptions that the organisation has a problem that needs to be fixed (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Patton, 2003). Boyd and Bright (2007) discuss the contrast between these

approaches on a continuum, which is subject to what they term “normative forces”. According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), AI is a daring reform to the style of how we challenge organisational change. One of the conclusive incongruities of AI is that its intention is not to alter anything, but rather to discover and convey the prevailing strengths, hopes and dreams of the organisation - in other words to ascertain and strengthen the positive core of the organisation in contrast to most others, which involve a deficit-based focus on problems and how to overcome them (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Deficit-based change is slow, and focuses on the causes of yesterday’s problems, producing no new images of the future. This leads to exhaustion and dependence on the hierarchy (The appreciative *inquiry handbook*, 2003, pp. 20-21), and results in low morale among individuals. This deficit-based change can cause burnout and inflexibility of the structure, leading to intergroup conflict. Role conflict and interpersonal problems can also be attributed to deficit-based change with an increase in organisational learning disabilities and lack of job satisfaction (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

The characteristic feature of AI is according to (Khonke & Stavros, 2003) the powerful observation of unconditional positive questions (Khonke & Stavros, 2003). The concept of the unconditional positive question concludes that whatever positive topic we wish to explore, we can explore unconditionally, and in doing so notably influence the destiny of our organisations and social theory (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001, p. 189). Modifications in linguistic practices, including the linguistic practice of crafting questions, have profound implications for changes in social practice. Accordingly, change is initiated the instant a question is asked (Fry et al., 2002, p. 5). The purpose of posing such questions is as to strengthen the organisation’s ability to appreciate its complete potential (Khonke & Stavros, 2003).

A principal supposition of the problem-solving approach, according to Ashford and Patkar (2001), is that the organisation is best served by eliminating its deficits. AI however, argues that organisations improve more readily through discovering and valuing, envisioning, dialogue and coconstructing the future. Egan and Lancaster (2005, p. 30) contend that the traditional problem-solving approaches restrict the

organisation's prospects of success because of highlighting the prevailing beliefs rather than tackling the possibilities for the creation of new beliefs.

AI is seen as building on the organisation's past successes. It is a highly participative process that nurtures a positive "inner dialogue", stimulates vision and creativity and accelerates change (Whitney & Trosten- Bloom, 2003). This can be differentiated from the deficit-based model, which commences with the beliefs that the organisation has a problem that needs fixing (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Patton, 2003). Boyd and Bright (2007) argue the difference between these approaches on a scale that is subject to what they term "normative forces" According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), AI is a daring transformation of the style used to challenge organisational change this is demonstrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

The Shift from Deficit-based Change to Positive Change

	Deficit-based change	Positive change
Intervention focus	Identified problem	Affirmative topics
Participation	Selective inclusion of people	Whole system
Action research	Diagnosis of the problem	Discovery of the positive core
	Causes and consequences	Organisation at its best
	Quantitative analysis	Narrative analysis
	Profile of need	Map of positive core
	Conducted by outsiders	Conducted by members
Dissemination	Feedback to decision makers	Widespread and creative sharing of best practices
Creative potential	Brainstormed list of alternatives	Dreams of a better world and the organisation's contribution
Result	Best solution to resolve the problem	Design to realise dreams and human aspirations
Capacity gained	Capacity to implement and measure the plan	Capacity for ongoing positive change

3.3 THE PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS OF AI

Coghlan et al. (2003, p. 6) describe AI as “both a philosophy and worldview with particular principles and assumptions and a structure set of core processes”. The principles and assumptions of AI provide the framework in which the implementation of the approach can take place in a number of settings and contexts.

AI is founded on the fundamental principles and assumptions that motivated and propelled the foundation from theory to practice (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The five basic principles are as follows:

- 1) *Simultaneity principle.* Change is initiated the instant we pose a question. This principle argues that inquiry and change cannot be kept separate but occur simultaneously. The moment a question is asked, change is articulated. Dialogue shapes images of the future, which then form reality.
- 2) *Poetic principle.* Human organisations are book, and we can select what we read. Organisations’ stories are constantly being coauthored by their members. The choice of story can alter for an organisation, and stories about success will lead to a different organisation, as opposed to those stories about failure.
- 3) *Anticipatory principle.* This principle suggests that the way individuals think about the future will define the way they move towards it.
- 4) *Positive principle.* According to Cooperrider (2008) the focus of this principle is the act of asking a positive question, thereby engaging the participant more deeply and or a longer period of time.
- 5) *Constructivist principle.* This principle is related to the social constructionist theory (Gergen in Reed, 2007), and refers to the notion that our beliefs about the world are established through interpretation and construction rather than only the simple recording of phenomena. This can be interpreted to assume that as diverse people interpret the world, diverse stories emerge describing the identical event. According to Moore (2008), the quest for one objective truth disregards the value that each of these stories may hold. AI considers the progressions of the construction of these stories, and the manner in which they influence how individuals think and act. Embedded within this principle are the key principles of social constructionism, which

include a critical stance towards commonplace phenomena, taken for granted knowledge, historical and cultural specificity, the belief that knowledge is constructed and sustained through social processes and the fact that knowledge production is inextricably linked to social action.

The belief that knowledge is formed and continued through social processes underscores the significance of social process in the construction and dissemination of knowledge (Gergen, 2003). AI should ensure one that all voices are heard equally so that stakeholders can construct a working picture of an organisation, based on the knowledge off an entire structure and not just that of the decision makers or disempowered.

3.4 THE AI PROCESS

Dialogue becomes the core process in providing an environment for cocreation and the potential to invest in new forms of relationships and interaction between stakeholders. The process of cocreating dialogue in an organisation through the facilitation of a coordinator encourages participants to use their collective imagination, develop stories and generate new ideas that foster what Gergen et al. (2003) refer to as “relational responsibility”.

Another manner in which to initiate cocreation is through the use of AI. The AI process demonstrates how dialogue, imagination and cocreation enact a role in organisational development, evaluating old patterns of thinking about a subject, cocreating new meanings and initiating transformation within the organisation- hence, according to social constructionism, constructing a place for dialogical conversations by constructing the use of the imagination. This helps people and organisations to realise their highest potential.

According to Geldenhuys (2015), in exploring ways of creating a context that invites dialoguing, the emphasis is on the relational processes between the team members, and not on the team members as entities themselves.

AI demonstrates a paradigm shift in the world of feasible organisational development and is a fundamental deviation from traditional deficit-based change, to a pos-

itive strength-based change approach (Cooperrider et al., 2008). AI focuses on leveraging an organisation's positive core strengths to design and redesign the systems within an organisation, in order to achieve a more effectual and viable future (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

AI initiatives are effected, traditionally using the 4-D cycle, which is a methodology that allows an organisation to identify its positive core strengths relative to the affirmative topic being addressed and to initiate the concrete steps to achieve its goals. AI is more than just a 4-D methodology - it is a change that is deeper, more meaningful and sustainable to the core of the organisation.

When individuals begin to utilise the vivid and resonating accounts of peak experiences, and associate the positive core with the change agenda, business transformations never thought possible can emerge. The 4-D cycle thus presents AI as a dynamic process of change (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Emphasis on the small group, according to Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987, p. 83), is responsive to the realities of social change in larger complex organisations. It is through group life that individuals learn, practise, develop and modify their roles within the larger organisation. It is well established that groups are formed around common ideas that are expressed in and through some kind of shared language which makes communicative interaction possible. The AI process is cyclical. There are different models in the literature depicting the AI process, namely the 4-D cycle and the 5-D cycle.

3.4.1 The 4-D cycle

The 4-D AI cycle is depicted in figure 3.2 below as having four distinct phases, namely discovery, dream, design and destiny. The discovery phase gives "life" to the process (Reed, 2007). The objective of the discovery phase is to discover what the participants value and perceive as the strength of the process. Making the discovery phase is by far the most critical phase of the entire AI process. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), it is the topic choice of the discovery phase that provides the central focus in all four of the 4-D phases. The information generated during the discovery phase allows for the foundations and planning to take place during the destiny phase, which is essential to the future success of the programme.

The best inquiry strategy is one that produces change. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) postulate that the participants involved in the AI process should select the topic carefully. This topic choice is crucial as it outlines the focus of the change process and determines the foundation for subsequent interviews and organisational learning. The topic is chosen prudently as human systems have a propensity to develop in the direction of what they study and ultimately decide what the organisation will become (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2008). The following two major decisions need to be made regarding the topic choice:

- 1) Who will select the topics? Executives, a core team, the entire organisation?
- 2) What topics will we study? What do we want more of in this organisation?

The answers to the above questions must be consistent with the type of organisation one is trying to create.

During the dream phase, the participants envision “what might be” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). It is during this phase that the participants work together as groups and plan and develop ideas and thoughts, thereby cocreating and developing a shared meaning of new realities of the future. During this phase, the participants are encouraged to be as creative as possible. This phase is essential in building and constructing the positive aspects of the process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The design phase is more realistic, and it is here that the participants develop what in AI terms are provocative propositions or core statements about what they hope to achieve through the AI process. These provocative propositions are the values and aims that have been proposed by all stakeholders, and in committing to the provocative propositions, the participants are essentially committing to the values and aims they have set for themselves and the organisation. Reed (2007, p. 33) defines these statements as “unequivocal ambitions with no caveats or conditions”.

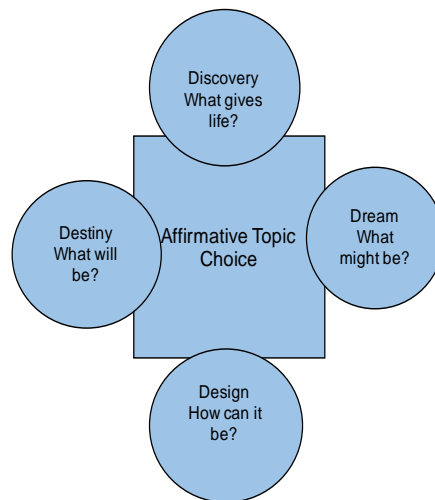


Figure 3.2. 4-D Cycle

Source: Cooperrider et al. 2003, p. 5

According to Preskill and Catsambas(2006), it is in the destiny and final phase of the 4-D cycle that the focus is on the implementation and planning that allow the participants to move in the direction of the predetermined goals. The purpose of this phase is to establish and embed the commitments made during the design phase by utilising and highlighting the past successes that will contribute to the future success of the programme.

3.4.2 The 5-D AI cycle

As an alternative to the 4D cycle, the 5D cycle, as depicted in figure 3.3 , enhances the 4D cycle with the inclusion of the destiny element. This element identifies of design and its strengthening of the 4D process in groups, communities and organisations.

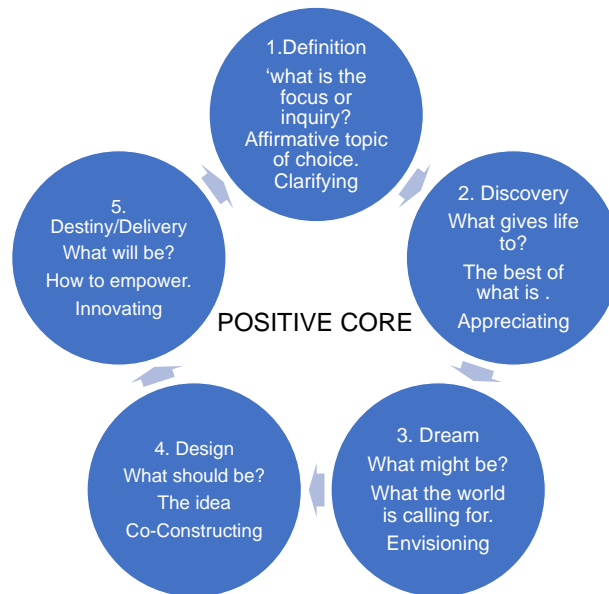


Figure 3.3. The 5D Cycle

Source: Author

The 5D cycle involves the following 5 phases:

- 1) The process of definition distinguishes the intent of the project, that is, the substance, and what needs to be realised. The definition of the subject allows the overarching question to channel the thoughts of the participants to collectively decide on the generative topic to be focused on.
- 2) The discovery “what is?” phase or ensuing discussion within the group is a modus of discovering “what works”. This phase rediscovers and remembers the organisation or community’s successes, strengths and periods of excellence.
- 3) Dreaming or imagining “what could be” draws on the organisation’s past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase, to imagine innovative probabilities and envision a desired future. This phase permits people to identify their dreams for a community or organisation, having discovered “what is best”.
- 4) Design brings together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from dream. It is referred to as bringing the “best of what is” together with “what might be”, to create “what should be the ideal” – deliver/destiny – creating “what will be”.

- 5) The fifth stage in the 5-D process identifies the destiny of the design, and its subsequent entrenchment in groups, communities and organisations. The destiny phase represents both the conclusion of the discovery, dream and design phases and the beginning of an ongoing creation of an “appreciative learning culture”. The destiny phase delivers on the new images of the future and is sustained by nurturing a collective sense of purpose. It is a time of continuous learning, adjustment and improvisation in the service of shared ideals. The momentum and potential for innovation are extremely high at this stage in the process. Because of the shared positive image of the future, everyone is invited to align his or her interactions in cocreating the future. Stakeholders are invited into an open-space planning and commitment session during this phase. Individuals and groups discuss what they can and will do to contribute to the realisation of the organisational dream as articulated in the provocative propositions. Action commitments then serve as the basis for ongoing activities. The key to sustaining the momentum is to build an “appreciative eye” into all of the organisation’s systems, procedures, and ways of working. The destiny phase is ongoing and brings the organisation back, full circle, to the discovery phase. In a systemic fashion, ongoing AI may result in new affirmative topic choices, continuous dialogues and continued learning (Cooperrider, 2000). The 4-D cycle is the most commonly used and was the method chosen for the purpose of the current study.

3.5 APPLICATIONS OF AI

AI can be employed by individuals, teams or, organisations, or at societal level. In each case, AI helps individuals to move towards a collective vision of the future by the participation of others in strategic innovation. The choice of AI and length of engagement are variable, and depend on the breadth and depth of the topics being explored, as well as the number of people involved in the process.

At the individual level, AI may be utilised for leadership coaching or the development of a personal strategic vision (Cooperrider, 2011). Teams and organisations, however, use AI to understand best practices, develop strategic plans, shift culture and create forward momentum for large-scale initiatives.

At organisational level, readiness for a change management intervention depends on the organisation's readiness for planned change. Gauges for readiness for change include understanding the need for forces for change, discontent with the status quo, the readiness of resources to support and sustain change, and the commitment of significant management time (Cummins & Worley, 2003). When such conditions are present, the intervention can be designed to deal with the organisational issues discovered in the course of the diagnosis (Cummins & Worley, 2009). AI has been used by various organisations to address sales growth as at Merck, improve customer service at British Airways, pursue sustainable value creation as at Walmart, develop leadership in the US Navy, and redesign organisational divisions and improve cost and quality and cycle time at John Deere (Lewis, 2008).

The AI intervention may have to be specifically tailored in order to be consistent with the culture of the specific organisation. When an OD practice is employed in an organisation with a unique culture, for example, a team-building intervention designed for top managers at a US firm, this may need to be modified when applied to the company's foreign subsidiaries (Cummins & Worley, 2009).

Lewis, Passmore, and Cantore (2008) relate the development of conversational approaches to organisational change as the intrinsic desire of humans to relate to one another and to organise, to the start of human civilisation. Conversations brought people together around questions that were vital to their survival (Lewis et al., 2008). Postmodernist thinking allows individuals to present their own perspectives and images of what the organisation signifies to them. This triggers the shift of the organisation from that of a solid organisation to an entity in a perpetual state of development. AI offers a new perspective of how the organisation works by coconstructing a new theory based on the experiences of the individuals working in the organisation.

3.6 USING AI AS A CHANGE MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION FOR CHANGING AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

An organisation's strengths lie with its people. In order to use AI as a change management intervention, the structures must be available within the organisation for its members to excel. This involves considering the goals, ideas and aspirations of the

individuals in the organisation in addition to affording them developmental opportunities to learn, grow and take risks (Cooperrider, 2008).

When individuals in an organisation are empowered, they feel significant, and believe that they have a chance to make a difference. When people at all levels of an organisation share a basic common vision in relation to the company's core mission, intent and direction, the company will thrive (Cooperrider, 2008).

When there are open channels of communication, responsiveness to others' needs and interpersonal competence, there will be a cooperative team spirit within an organisation (Cooperrider, 2008). According to Cooperrider (2008), AI has achieved remarkable results in the areas of productivity improvement, efficiency and performance. The four areas of competence in an organisation, namely affirmative, expansive, generative and collaborative, are expanded through the ongoing application of the skills applied during the discovery, dream, design and destiny phases.

In affirmative competence, the organisation draws on the human capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes and potentials. By nurturing affirmative competence, leaders of a high-performing organisation celebrate the members' achievements, thereby drawing attention to the members' strengths as the source of the organisation's vitality.

Expansive competence challenges the habits of members to stretch in new directions, evolving into a set of higher values. When changing an organisation's culture, one needs to challenge members by going beyond familiar ways of thinking.

Members need to see the results of their actions and recognise that they are making a meaningful contribution and experience a sense of progress. In order to make a difference, people need to experience and see that their daily tasks make a difference. In a culture in which change is managed, the members are encouraged to participate in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives, which will promote transformation of the system (Cooperrider, 2008).

Change management is a methodology that reconsiders the ordinary individual with the intent to find out what works, what is right and what is improving. Positive change management comprises considering prospects for growth rather than focusing on

the negative. This necessitates a modification in thinking for many people. For example, instead of thinking “How will this change affect me?”, turn the phrase into a positive one such as “What changes can I make to produce effective results?” (Bull, 2002, p. 11). There is convincing verification that a strengths-based organisational culture and appropriate change management practices such as AI can help organisations meet their business goals (Tombaugh, 2005, p. 17).

Lewis et al. (2008) emphasise that an essential feature of organisations is the perception of themselves as human systems. This can be substantiated by the fact people make up organisations. AI, according to Lewis et al. (2008), offers an alternative manner of discerning methods of change. It replaces the classical method of assuming an organisational analysis, applying a plan and following this up with the consequential management of resistance, with the emphasis on identifying and developing what is already giving life to an organisation. With its foundation in positive psychology, positive change management means that change is an opportunity for transformation (Hillenbrand, 2005).

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter started by discussing the notion that AI may have an impact as an organisational developmental intervention in the case of the merging of different organisational cultures. The concept of AI was then defined. The history and purpose of AI were examined and the difference between AI and problem-solving approaches explained. The principles and assumptions of AI were also outlined. The AI process and 4-D and 5-D cycles were discussed, together with the applications of AI. The chapter concluded with a discussion of AI as a change management intervention.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the reader to the research setting and the AI intervention as and OD intervention that was conducted for this research study. The AI workshop that was conducted is then explained, showing the visual representations of the positive core statement. The entrée and establishment of the roles and how access was gained by the researcher to the participants, are outlined. The sampling methods, research strategy, data collection methods and data recording for the study are then detailed. This is followed by a discussion of the rigour and trustworthiness of the data, as well as a detailed analysis of the data and affinities, the relationship between the affinities, the Pareto principle and conflict analysis. In conclusion, a Systems Influence Diagram (SID) is constructed as a visual representation of each of the affiliations of the whole system.

4.2 RESEARCH SETTING

The research was conducted among the employees of a large telecommunications company based in South Africa. This organisation supplies both cellular telephones and the infrastructure that supports the cellular phone network. This organisation comprises several large business units in various geographical regions, both in South Africa and on the African continent. For the purpose of this research, the researcher worked in collaboration with the organisation's repair centre in Johannesburg and the company that employs and supplies the staffing needs of this large organisation, with a staff complement of over 5 000. This particular division, with a staff of 100 people, is responsible for the repairs of thousands of cell phone units that come in for repairs on a daily basis.

Prior to the intervention, management had decided to integrate the smaller teams provided by the various smaller service providers into one large integrated more functional team. After a discussion with the management team, it was decided that AI would be the best intervention to assist with the formation of the new team.

4.3 ENTRÉE AND ESTABLISHING ROLES

The researcher was responsible for the facilitation of the AI intervention in this particular study. She was familiar with AI after having completed the AI programme at the University of South Africa. The facilitator held the position of an outsider or observer in relation to the group of participants because she was not employed by the organisation. It was therefore necessary for the researcher to familiarise herself with the organisation and the needs of both the participants and the management of the organisation.

An important consideration is how the researcher approaches the setting. According to Reed (2007, p. 83), the position of viewing this as an outsider allows the researcher to propose views that would not perhaps be voiced by someone accustomed to the world being studied.

Gaining access to research participants is a critical part of the research process. This statement conceals the genuine complexity involved in the process of acquiring access to the participants, the information available and the significance of the information available (Feldman, Bell, & Burger, 2003). In the current study, the researcher was the facilitator for the AI intervention.

Once permission had been obtained from the Managing Director of the organisation in writing, an invitation was sent by the manager to all the staff members via e-mail, inviting them to participate in the AI intervention that was to be held, and the subsequent IQA. The employees could thus choose whether or not to participate.

Research is an invasive process and requires a fair amount of the participants' time to probe into their lives (Feldman et al., 2003). In the process of ethical research the onus is on the researcher to ensure that the research participants receive benefit equal to the risk or burden they accept as a result of the research.

There are various ethical standards have been set, which help direct and define the role of the researcher within these alliances, some of these are

- informed consent
- non-maleficence
- beneficence

- voluntary participation
- confidentiality

These assist researchers in their collaborations with research participants (De Vos, Striding, Fouche, & Delport, 2005). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participants are protected. The aim of qualitative research validation is to give the research participants a voice (Carter & Delamont, 1996). However, it is still up to the participants whether or not they wish to converse. The researcher has a responsibility to the participants to ensure that the research is conducted with scientific professionalism cognisant of compassion and empathy, as well as upholding the ethical and scientific principles of the discipline and ensuring that they do not discredit or isolate the discipline from the wider social structure

The researcher submitted an application to conduct the research to the management of the organisation. Both written and verbal submissions were made and permission was granted to proceed with the research. The research purpose was explained to management and the participants. The ethical parameters were clearly defined, and these included informed consent, the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time and the issue of confidentiality. The researcher explained that the research was entirely voluntary and there would be no adverse impacts resulting from their participation in this study. (See appendix 1 for the letter of permission.)

4.4 THE AI INTERVENTION

An AI intervention was conducted with the staff of the repair centre unit, with the intention of focusing on building a new team and culture following the integration of various smaller teams into one large unit.

The intervention was a full-day programme conducted with 35 of the staff members of the business unit. Even though the session was fun, the intention was to generate a meaningful result, giving the employees and management a clear direction of what would be expected from all parties in the immediate future. A tangible vision was constructed during the AI intervention, which all team members would be able to refer to daily.

4.4.1 The AI process

As stated previously, the AI intervention was in the form of a one-day workshop. This intervention necessitated the effective participation of all participants during the four stages of the 4-D AI process, namely the definition of the affirmative topic, phase 1 the discovery or uncovering of what is good about the current status of the team they came from.

The initial phase 2 dream phase allowed the participants to imagine the ideal of what could be, and the phase 3 design of the future of the organisation in collaboration with the formation of a positive proposition. The final phase 4 destiny phase allowed the participants to cocreate action plans that could be employed on a daily basis, thus enabling the maintenance of the desired future for the team and the organisation.

The two main premises of AI research, according to Reed (2007, p. 70), are inclusivity and a focus on the positive. The primary aim was to include all of the participants in the study in a collaborative manner, with the secondary aim to discover the positive and focus on the positive stories of achievements and successes (Reed, 2007).

The participants were introduced to the AI process and how it would unfold. The team was fully aware of the recent restructuring of the company, and were eager to start working towards a more integrated work unit.

4.4.2 Choosing the affirmative topic

This topic was developed and formulated in collaboration with management and was the focus of the study. This was done prior to commencing the workshop. Three members of management were present for this. The affirmative topic was “building a new team and culture following the integration of various smaller teams into one unit”.

4.4.3 The interview protocol and affirmative questions posed

The questions for the interviews were constructed prior to the workshop. This was for the paired interviews during phase 2, the Discovery phase of the workshop.

The interview protocol covered the following: In this room everyone has at some time been part of a successful, rewarding experience in this organisation, Everyone has been a part of the culture of this organisation.

1) In order to learn what brought us together, we have to know where we came from.

- What first made you become involved in this organisation?

2) Reflect on and think about a time when you felt at your best. Everything was going well: timing, customers, your knowledge and message, the questions, how you managed your responses, etc. You knew you were making a difference. Tell your story.

- What was the situation?
- What factors made this a significant experience?
- What was your involvement?
- Who was there?
- What/who else enabled or contributed to this being a moment of excellence (e.g. systems, culture, facilities and leadership)
- What was the outcome?
- How did you feel?

3) Every organisation needs the cooperative contribution of every person in order to make a difference. It is important for each individual to recognise what he or she brings to both the culture and performance of this organisation.

- Without being modest, what do you value about yourself in the story (e.g. as a colleague, friend, team member or leader)?
- What do you value most about what you bring to the culture at this organisation?
- What did you value most about the organisation's culture?

4) What is the core factor that gives life to this organisation – one thing that is important for you to retain, regardless of whatever changes may occur?

- 5) Imagine three years from now and you and the team have developed a great capacity, your performance is rated as very good/excellent, and you are excited about the culture and performance of this team and organisation. What three things have you contributed to get this organisation to this place? (For the purposes of this research, the identity of the organisation was not disclosed and was referred to as “this organisation”).

4.5 THE AI PROCESS

The 4-D cycle was used, comprising the discover, dream, design and deliver phases.

4.5.1 Discovery phase

The discovery phase commenced by pairing the participants. The facilitator read the interview protocol and gave instructions on how to engage in the interviews. Sixty minutes were allowed for each interview where all the questions drafted were asked and reviewed by the participants. After 30 minutes, the participants were requested to change roles from being the person interviewed to the interviewer.

During the interview process, the participants explored the best of their past experiences and achievements. This is what the participants could see through the lens of social constructionism. According to Geldenhuys (2015), the epistemological assumption of social constructionism is that knowledge is constructed through social processes, and accordingly signifies distinctive realism at work.

4.5.2 Dream phase

Once the paired interviews were completed, the participants formed one group for the dream phase.

Here they were asked to look one year ahead, and picture themselves in the same space with the colleagues they admired, with strong team relationships and targets being achieved. The criticality of this assumption in AI is what drives the need for inclusivity in the process (Lewis & Van Tiem, 2004).

This principle of inclusivity explains why AI is cooperative and coevolutionary (Cooperrider & Srivastava, 1987; Cooperrider et al., 2003; Jacobsgaard, 2003). As

each participant contributes what he or she values about the organisation, the collective story of the organisation evolves to accommodate this latest contribution to its history and everyday life.

The group was then given paper, crayons, scissors, pencils, glue and newspapers to enable them to visually illustrate the positive outcomes. Once constructed, these were described by each group to the rest of the participants. According to Cooper-rider and Srivastva (1987, p. 83), emphasis on the small group is responsive to the realities of social change in larger complex organisations. It is through group life that individuals learn, practise, develop, and modify their roles within the larger organisation. It is well established that groups are formed around common ideas that are expressed in and through some kind of shared language that makes communicative interaction possible.

Figure 4.1 shows the visual constructions of the positive core statements or provocative propositions. According to Reed (2007, p. 173), these are intended to inspire action by conveying deep-seated assertions of purpose. These provocative propositions are expressed as idealistic statements that challenge the group to think of ways in which they can put their ideas into operation. This group identified the following positive core statements:

- to deliver the best
- when the tough get going keep the fire burning
- grow together
- access within this organisation to opportunity and beyond
- growing education

More detailed ways of stating the above were discussed with the team. For example "to deliver the best" was expanded into "each individual would deliver their best enabling a more efficient workstream, this would result in a more satisfied customer." The process of AI then becomes more tangible and is actualised and resonated by the reader. The provocative proposition states what could be done differently and what needs to be in place for this to happen.



Figure 4.1. Appreciative Inquiry Resultant Positive Core Images

Source: Author, images created by the groups at the workshop.

4.5.3 Design phase

From the images constructed after the dream phase, in the design phase, the group were requested to take the images they had constructed, and construct a reality through the translation of these statements and images into goals, strategies and action items.

4.5.4 Destiny phase

During the destiny phase, the group discussed how they would sustain these goals and the enthusiasm that had been generated during the workshop. This included the team discussing in depth how important and essential communication was as an enabler. With the correct levels of communication and understanding, the team felt that they would be more productive. This meant that both the team members and management had to make a concerted effort to improve the communication channels. With regard to the statement of when the “tough get going”, here the team addressed the issue of some of the team members losing interest and giving up on the job when they highlighted what the organisation refers to as the “red spotlight”, namely the worst-performing team of the month. This also has an impact on the monthly stock-take and is often seen here when the numbers are incorrect. The team felt that they could use the positive core statement to pull through from failure, help each other through the tough times, break barriers (i.e. communication), and pull together with a new sense of purpose. The team felt if they could address these barriers they would be able to use the opportunity of the restructuring to grow together. If this could be accomplished, new channels of learning and ultimately promotion might be accessible to the team members.

According to Weiner and Hill (2008), long-term sustainability is the involvement and integration of employees and individuals from the start in order to create a common new identity and shared vision. Reed (2007, pp.186-187) contends that AI interventions can contribute to innovation, change and sustaining achievement by virtue of the fact that it recognises that organisations have strengths that can be built on. AI attempts to discover and appreciate what works well, goals are generated and skills identified, which support the need for innovation (Reed, 2007).

4.6 SAMPLING

The sampling for participating in the IQA that was conducted six months after the AI intervention is now discussed. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006), a sample needs to be representative of the population about which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions. For the constituencies/focus groups, a purposive sample approach was chosen.

For the first phase of the IQA, namely the focus groups, constituents were selected according to the criteria of “distance and power” (Northcutt & McCoy 2004, p. 69) in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. The constituents for this study were a purposive sample of 13 members of staff who had participated in the AI intervention, and seven members of staff and management who had not participated. For the purpose of this study, the two groups (i.e. those who had participated in the AI intervention and those who had not) were combined into one focus group. The members who had not participated in the AI intervention were fully briefed on the AI and were aware of the outcomes of the intervention.

For the second phase of the data collection (interviews), purposive sampling was used to select participants for the interviews. Three individuals were chosen who had not participated in the AI session, and two individuals who had. This was voluntary. The groups consisted of three black males, and one black and one Chinese female. Owing to time constraints in the organisation, these two groups were combined but worked separately on the same issue statement.

4.7 RESEARCH STRATEGY

As stated previously, the IQA was conducted six months after the AI intervention. The members who had not participated in the AI intervention were fully briefed on the AI intervention and were aware of the outcomes of this intervention.

The first phase of the IQA comprises focus group discussion. According to Cooper and Srivastva (1987, p. 83) emphasis on the small group is responsive to the realities of social change in larger complex organisations. It is through group life that individuals learn, practise, develop, and modify their roles within the larger organisation. It is well established that groups are formed around common ideas that are

expressed in and through some kind of shared language, which makes communicative interaction possible (Cooperrider, 2003).

The second phase of the IQA process comprised of interviews. During this phase, the researcher shared the definition from the focus groups of each affinity with the participants and then engaged in dialogue by saying the following: “Tell me what this means to you” (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 197). The purpose of this was to encourage the participants to reflect on the personal meaning and experiences relevant to each affinity (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 197). The outcome of an interview, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004) is twofold, providing

- a rich detailed and exemplified description of each affinity from the participant’s point of view
- a mind-map of the phenomenon for the participant.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data was collected in two phases, which is in accordance with IQA protocols (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The initial phase consisted of the focus group and the production of a visual representation known as a Systems Integrated Diagram (SID). (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This diagram was subsequently used in the second phase for the individual semistructured interviews. The role of the researcher in an IQA focus group, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004), is that of a facilitator with the intention of allowing the constituents to reflect on their experiences of the phenomenon being researched.

The focus group session began with a clarification or warm-up exercise. Here the participants were asked to reflect back to the AI session and the research exercise (the positive core statements generated in this session had been placed on the wall in the room). The question was put to both sets of members who formed the focus group, as those who had not attended the AI session were familiar with what had happened.

During the first phase of the IQA, the researcher allowed the constituents, by means of silent brainstorming, to probe their experiences of the AI. Common perceptions were noted, with each constituent having slightly diverse insights. This process was

preceded by the facilitator providing an issue statement, which is used to “deconstruct and operationalise the research question” (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011, p. 117). The following issue question was then posed to the group: “When you think back on the process of Appreciative Inquiry that you as a team have recently undertaken to try and integrate and work together in order to be more productive, how has it impacted this team?”

The members who had not been present at the AI session were asked to reflect back on the process in general and the integration of the team post the intervention. The following issue statement was put to them: “Tell me about your experiences of this team after the Appreciative Inquiry Phase of the integration of this team”.

After a brief discussion of the issue statement, the constituents devoted about ten minutes to silently reflecting on their experiences of AI and writing their reflections on Post-Its. There was no limit to the number of Post-Its each constituent could write. In order to diminish the authority of assertive group members, this process was conducted in silence. The Post-Its were arbitrarily positioned on boards on the wall (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The second phase of the study involved individual semistructured interviews centred on the visual presentation engendered by the focus group.

4.9 RECORDING OF THE DATA

The index cards generated by the focus group were displayed on boards on the wall for the entire focus group to see. The researcher then read each card aloud for the entire group to deliberate and attain a socially constructed, shared meaning of each response among the members of the group. This also enabled the members of the group to diminish any nebulousness or ambiguities that may have been associated with the meaning of the words or phrases on the cards. The IQA method, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 149), creates an audit trail that records each step and decision in the process.

Owing to the nature of the business and the premises that the focus group session and individual interviews were conducted at, these were recorded by field notes taken by the facilitator as no cell phone or any form of recording device was allowed

on the premises. This was one of the limitations of the study and was extremely difficult for the researcher.

4.10 STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO ENSURE THE QUALITY AND TRUST-WORTHINESS OF THE DATA

According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p.7), compared to other methods of qualitative research, IQA is characterised by the desirable properties of confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability. The data collection and analysis are public, replicable and not dependent on the nature of the elements themselves. The product of an IQA study is a visual representation of a phenomenon prepared according to rigorous and replicable rules for the purpose of achieving complexity, simplicity, comprehensiveness and interpretability (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 41).

Regarding the trustworthiness of IQA research, because of triangulation, there are multiple methods to check the validity of the findings. The members check the participants' review report for accuracy. There is a logical chain of evidence from the questions posed to the final findings.

The use of pattern matching in the Interraltionship Diagramme IRD supports the findings. The method is conducted over a period of time, which increases reliability and allows the researcher to observe the trends over a period of time.

For the purpose of this study, because recording devices were not allowed in the actual session as prescribed by the rules of the organisation, the division deals with repairs of millions of phones, and additional phones are not allowed on the premises, the researcher took detailed notes of the focus group. In addition, the interviews were substantiated by means of notes.

The index cards generated by the group were displayed on boards on the wall for the whole group to see. This enabled the group to deduce together a socially constructed and shared meaning of each response of each member of the group and thereby reduce any misunderstanding that may have been associated with the words or phrases on the cards.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

The IQA process was used for the data analysis and comprised the steps outlined below.

4.11.1 Affinities

In IQA, affinities refer to the themes identified by the constituencies (focus group). The analysis of the data commences once the constituents have completed brainstorming. In clarifying the data, the facilitator reads each Post-It aloud, enabling the constituents to confirm and affirm their understanding and the meaning of the affinity read (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The constituents were then encouraged to identify the commonalities within the many responses, which allows the cards to be clustered according to meaningful criteria (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This process is known as inductive coding, and during this phase, the constituents arrange the Post-Its together under common meanings. This process continues until the constituents reach agreement on the placement of the Post-Its into affinity groupings that generate a combined view of the process, namely axial coding affinities. In order to avoid any bias or dominance by any group member, this process is again conducted in silence (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This process enables the affinities to be described and narrowed, until each participant agrees that the definition precisely exhibits the meaning of the affinity. Table 4.1 below documents the words and phrases that were shared by the group during the session.

Table 4.1

Words and Phrases Shared by the Group

Learning	Teamwork	Communicating
Working as a team	Effective communication	Values time and accuracy
Incentives	Personal gain	Brought us together
Lifelong learning	Safe environment	Support values
Time	Accuracy	Resolve issues
Incorporate communication	Talk to each other	Personal growth
Working as a team	Most admired	No red spotlight
Effective communication	Helped pull us together	Genuine impact
Work together as a team	Strong teamwork	Accurate work
Better communication	Save time	Complete work in specified time
Time	Accuracy	Work accurately together
Appreciate each other	Strong teamwork	Better communication
Most admired	Avoid red spotlight	Complete tasks in tie
Better productivity	Support values	Most admired team
Team pull together	Time	Accuracy
Support values		

The focus group generated five affinities (table 4.2). These titles were documented on header notes and placed at the top of each vertical column. The meaning of each affinity produced was discussed and the group agreed on a shared definition

Table 4.2

The Affinities as Described in the Words of the Group

Affinity name	Meaning of each affinity
Accuracy	The degree to which the final product conforms exactly to the clients' standards and specifications.
Time	The work given to the team was completed within the required time specified by management.
Support values	We as team have clear standards of behaviour that are acceptable and internalised by the group and individuals to be considered as meaningful.
Most admired	As a team, we are regarded with respect and gain approval from management and stakeholders.
Effective communication	We are able to effectively impart and relay required knowledge to all members of the team.

4.11.2 Relationship between affinities

IQA is intended to establish the causal relationship between the affinities through theoretical coding in which the participants establish the observed cause and effect relationship between the affinities in a system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 149). The method evolves when the participants are afforded the opportunity to indicate the directional links between the affinities, of which the following three relationships are possible:

- 1) If A influences B
- 2) If B influences A
- 3) There is no relationship between A and B

In this study, the constituents were placed in subgroups to record the perceived relationships between the identified affinities on the affinity relationship table (ART). A cause-and-effect relationship between the affinities was ascertained by voting (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 165). The researcher noted the frequency of each of the three directional hypotheses on a master ART. In order to establish which of the relationships to analyse from the combined collection of causal relationships, the Pareto principle is employed by IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

4.11.3 Pareto principle and conflict analysis

The Pareto principle, which states that 20% of the variables in a system will account for 80% of the total variation in outcome (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 157), is a powerful method for achieving and documenting the degree of consensus in a focus group.

According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 161) it has to be assumed that a focus group has a written number of hypotheses arguing that affinity A influences affinity B. Another set of hypotheses will argue that affinity B influences affinity A. When this is applied to the Pareto chart, the argument is not resolved. The top 20% contain hypotheses that argue for both directions, and both sets seem equally plausible (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004).

To determine the optimal number of relationships to compromise the composite system, the term “optimal” is used in the sense that the researcher’s goal is to use the fewest number of relationships (for parsimony’s sake) that represent the greatest amount of variation (for the sake of comprehensiveness and richness) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 157).

Table 4.3

Pareto Analysis of the AI Participants

Affinity Pair Relationship	Frequency Sorted (Descending)	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent (Relation)	Cumulative Percent (Frequency)	Power	Instructions: Select columns A & B (lines 2 thru 21) and sort by descending order.			
1 < 2	11	11	5,0	9,8	4,8				
3 < 4	10	21	10,0	18,8	8,8				
2 < 3	9	30	15,0	26,8	11,8				
1 < 3	8	38	20,0	33,9	13,9				
1 < 4	8	46	25,0	41,1	16,1	Examine Column E, the Cumulative Percent (Frequency). When the percentage reaches 80% note the Frequency number in Column B. This is the cutoff for acceptable affinity relationships. If the same frequency number continues beyond 80% the cutoff is where the next frequency number value changes.			
1 < 5	8	54	30,0	48,2	18,2				
2 < 5	8	62	35,0	55,4	20,4				
3 < 5	8	70	40,0	62,5	22,5				
4 < 5	8	78	45,0	69,6	24,6				
2 < 4	7	85	50,0	75,9	25,9	Copy columns A & B to the cutoff point and paste them in the conflict sheet.			
2 > 4	5	90	55,0	80,4	25,4				
1 > 4	3	93	60,0	83,0	23,0				
1 > 5	3	96	65,0	85,7	20,7				
2 > 5	3	99	70,0	88,4	18,4				
3 > 5	3	102	75,0	91,1	16,1				
4 > 5	3	105	80,0	93,8	13,8				
1 > 2	2	107	85,0	95,5	10,5				
1 > 3	2	109	90,0	97,3	7,3				
3 > 4	2	111	95,0	99,1	4,1				
2 > 3	1	112	100,0	100,0	0,0				
Total Frequency	112	Equal Total Frequency	Equals 100%	Equals 100%	Power = E-D				

It is necessary to resolve ambiguous relationships, namely relationships that attract votes in either direction (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 157). Conflict analysis is used

to identify the conflicting relationships or those that have arrows in both directions - that is, an affinity that received votes as both cause and effect. In this study, there were no conflicting relationships.

Table 4.3 indicates the Pareto analysis conducted in this study of the AI participants, and table 4.4 the Pareto analysis of the non-AI participants.

In table 4.3 the two constituents were combined even though they had worked separately.

Table 4.4

Pareto Analysis of Non-AI Participants

Affinity Pair Relationship	Frequency Sorted (Descending)	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent (Relation)	Cumulative Percent (Frequency)	Power		Instructions: Select columns A & B (lines 2 thru 21) and sort by descending order.				
1 < 3	5	5	5,0	7,1	2,1						
2 < 4	5	10	10,0	14,3	4,3						
2 < 5	5	15	15,0	21,4	6,4						
1 > 2	4	19	20,0	27,1	7,1						
1 > 5	4	23	25,0	32,9	7,9						
2 > 3	4	27	30,0	38,6	8,6		Examine Column E, the Cumulative Percent (Frequency). When the percentage reaches 80% note the Frequency number in Column B. This is the cutoff for acceptable affinity relationships. If the same frequency number continues beyond 80% the cutoff is where the next frequency number value changes.				
2 < 3	4	31	35,0	44,3	9,3						
3 > 4	4	35	40,0	50,0	10,0						
3 < 4	4	39	45,0	55,7	10,7						
3 > 5	4	43	50,0	61,4	11,4						
3 < 5	4	47	55,0	67,1	12,1						
4 > 5	4	51	60,0	72,9	12,9						
1 < 2	3	54	65,0	77,1	12,1		Copy columns A & B to the cutoff point and paste them in the conflict sheet.				
1 > 3	3	57	70,0	81,4	11,4						
1 < 5	3	60	75,0	85,7	10,7						
4 < 5	3	63	80,0	90,0	10,0						
1 < 4	2	65	85,0	92,9	7,9						
2 > 4	2	67	90,0	95,7	5,7						
2 > 5	2	69	95,0	98,6	3,6						
1 > 4	1	70	100,0	100,0	0,0						
Total Frequency	70	Equal Total Frequency	Equals 100%	Equals 100%	Power = E-D						

4.11.4 Interrelationship diagramme (IRD)

The IRD is generated from the affinity pair relationships, which, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 170), is the initial step in rationalising the system. Each affinity relationship is recorded to generate the composite IRD. The IRD provides that data necessary to establish which of the affinities are drivers and which are outcomes. Those affinities with positive deltas are referred to as the drivers or

causes, and those with negative deltas as the outcomes or effects (Bargate, 2014). The IRDs for both groups are presented in figures 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

Affinity Tabular IRD AI PARTICIPANTS

Affinity Name

- 1.Accuracy
- 2.Time
- 3.Support Values
- 4.Most Admired
- 5.Effective Communication

Tabular IRD								
	1	2	3	4	5	OUT	IN	D
1		<	<	<	<	0	4	-4
2	^		<	<	<	1	3	-2
3	^	^		<	<	2	2	0
4	^	^	^		<	3	1	2
5	^	^	^	^		4	0	4

Count the number of up arrows (^) or Outs

Count the number of left arrows (<) or Ins

Subtract the number of Ins from the Outs to determine the (D) Deltas

D = Out- In

Tabular IRD – Sorted in Descending Order of D								
						OUT	IN	D
5	^	^	^	^		4	0	4
4	^	^	^		<	3	1	2
3	^	^		<	<	2	2	0
2	^		<	<	<	1	3	-2
1		<	<	<	<	0	4	-4

Tentative SID Assignments

- 5 Effective Communication PD
- 4 Most Admired SD
- 3 Support Values P
- 2 Time SO
- 1 Accuracy PO

Figure 4.2. IRD AI participants

Affinity Tabular IRD NON AI PARTICIPANTS

Affinity Name

- 1.Accuracy
- 2.Time
- 3.Support Values
- 4.Most Admired
- 5.Effective Communication

Tabular IRD								
	1	2	3	4	5	OUT	IN	D
1		<	<	<	<	0	4	-4
2	^		<	<	<	1	3	-2
3	^	^		<	<	2	2	0
4	^	^	^		<	3	1	2
5	^	^	^	^		4	0	4

Count the number of up arrows (^) or Outs

Count the number of left arrows (<) or Ins

Subtract the number of Ins from the Outs to determine the (D) Deltas

D = Out- In

Tabular IRD – Sorted in Descending Order of D								
	1	2	3	4	5	OUT	IN	D
5	^	^	^	^		4	0	4
4	^	^	^		<	3	1	2
3	^	^		<	<	2	2	0
2	^		<	<	<	1	3	-2
1		<	<	<	<	0	4	-4

Tentative SID Assignments	
5	Effective Communication PD
4	Most Admired SD
3	Support Values P
2	Time SO
1	Accuracy PO

Figure 4.3. IRD: Non- AI Participants

4.11.5 Systems influence diagram (SID)

IQA allows the researchers and participants to gain awareness and understanding of complex systems by presenting the affinities and their relationships visually in an SID.

In order to reach this phase, an IRD was developed to sort the constructs by providing them with a tentative place in the diagram in terms of the relative drivers and outcomes of the system.

Table 4.5

Tentative SID Assignments: AI Participants

	Affinities	Outcomes
1	Effective communication	Primary driver
2	Most admired	Secondary driver
3	Support values	Pivot/circulator
4	Time	Secondary outcome
5	Accuracy	Primary outcome

As indicated In table 4.6 below, the tentative SID assignments of the non-AI participants allowed the researcher and participants to gain awareness and understanding of complex systems by presenting the affinities and relationships visually in an SID.

Table 4.6

Tentative SID Assignments: Non-AI Participants

	Affinities	Outcomes
1	Effective communication	Primary driver
2	Most admired	Secondary driver
3	Support values	Pivot/circulator
4	Time	Secondary outcome
5	Accuracy	Primary outcome

The SID is a visual depiction of each of the affiliations of the whole system (Northcutt & McCoy 2004, p. 174). When depicting an SID, the primary drivers are positioned on the extreme left-hand side and the primary outcomes on the extreme right-hand side of the SID. The secondary outcomes and drivers are placed between them. For every single relationship in the IRD table, an arrow is drawn between the two affinities representing the direction of the cause and the effect, the outcome of which is a cluttered SID (Bargate, 2014). If the SID is to have any relevance, the redundant links need to be eliminated. It is this uncluttered SID that gives the SID relevance (Bargate, 2014).

The intricacy of the SID might limit the outcome, which results in a simpler representation being sought. This is achieved by eliminating and identifying the redundant link. This process is known as “rationalisation” and, according to Northcutt and McCoy (2004, p. 37), “undertaken to describe the comprehensiveness, complexity, parsimony or simplicity and visual interpretability”. This structure benefits the reliability of the findings because no two researchers exercising the same method correctly, would be able to reach different representations of the system (Human-Vogel & Van Petegem, 2008).

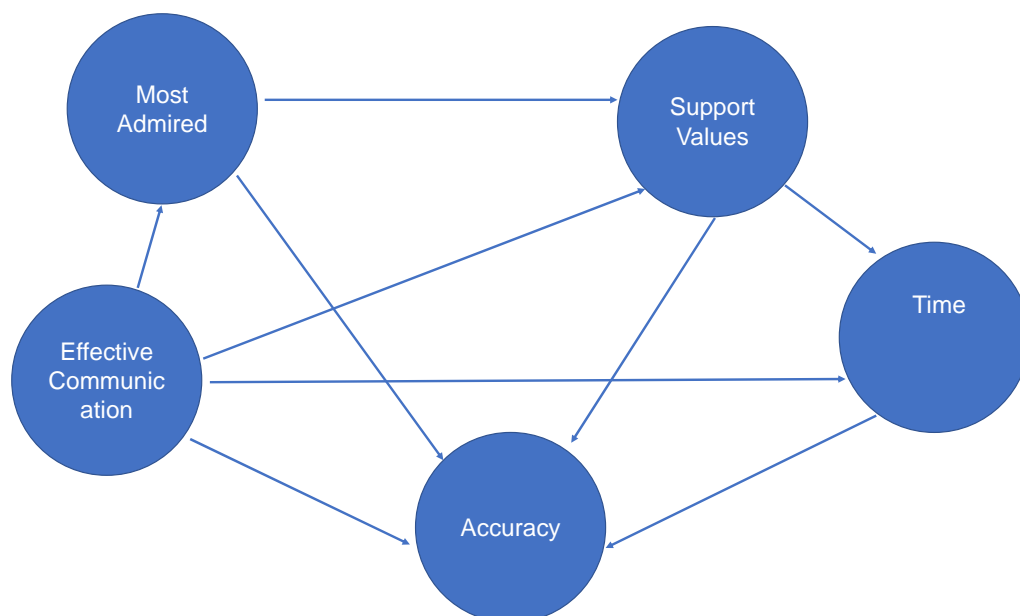


Figure 4.4. Cluttered SID for AI Participants and Non- AI Participants

Source: Author

It should be noted in this study, that because the tentative SID assignments were the same, the researcher only reports on one SID from here onwards.

4.11.6 The uncluttered SID

According to Bargate (2014), after all the redundant links have been removed and all the relationships examined, the diagram results in an uncluttered SID.

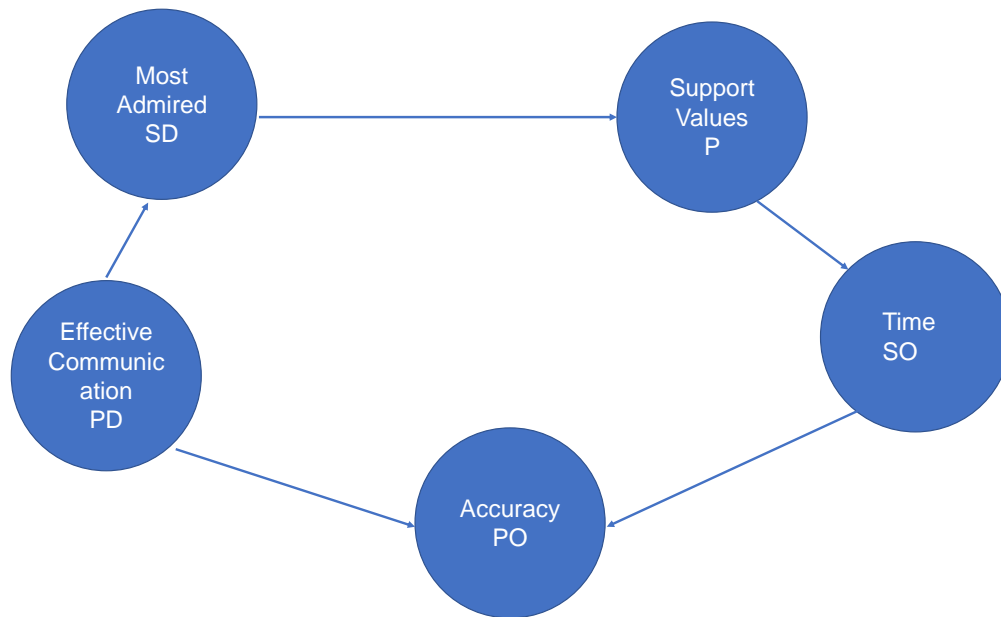


Figure 4.5. Uncluttered SID: AI Participants and Non- AI Participants

Source: Author

4.12 REPORTING

Verbal quotations were transcribed and presented as evidence from the focus group and individual interviews. The anonymity of the participants was respected throughout this process. English was used in order to attain the focus of communication during the entire process even though the focus group consisted of many diverse cultures.

4.13 SUMMARY

This chapter commenced with an introduction to the research setting and the AI intervention, the AI workshop, entrée and establishment of the roles of the researcher and the participants. The sampling method, research strategy and recording of the data, and the power of the researcher and the difficulties she experienced

in gaining access to the sample were considered, as well as the applicability of IQA to this particular study. The IQA process was then reviewed and defined as per the research problem. The steps utilised in IQA were then discussed. In addition, the researcher reviewed the ontological perspective of IQA in accordance with this study, and then identified and explained the process and steps of the IQA process. The researcher recorded the data with due consideration of the rigour and trustworthiness of the data. The data was then analysed in terms of the affinities, the relationship between them, the Pareto principle and conflict analysis. The information was then evaluated and illustrated in an SID, which provided a visual representation of each of the affinities of the whole system. The antecedent findings were then reported.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 focused on the empirical findings of the study. This chapter discusses the findings of the study and of the focus group interviews, as well as the conclusions stemming from the focus groups specifying the primary and secondary drivers and the pivot point. The subsequent primary and secondary outcomes and the outcomes of the interviews are highlighted, and the overall findings then explained.

In this chapter, the findings of the focus group sessions were documented and the subsequent interviews that followed discussed. The findings of the focus group studies were then evaluated and this included the results of the five affinities. The outcomes relating to the primary driver, the secondary driver, the pivot, the primary outcome and the secondary outcome were considered. The findings of the interview process were then evaluated. This was followed by an assessment of the conversation relating the findings

5.2 FINDINGS RELATING TO THE FOCUS GROUP

The five affinities generated from the two groups were as follows:

- 1) accuracy
- 2) support values
- 3) effective communication
- 4) most admired
- 5) time

These affinities were used by the constituents in the focus group to generate theory through a process of induction and deduction. Quotations relating to a precise affinity were then allocated together in that group.

The focus group in this study generated five affinities that the constituents used to construct a theory by way of inductive and deductive processes. The affinities were allocated a comparative place in the system by placing them in descending order of

delta, and consequently enabling the outcome of drivers (causes) and outcomes (effects) within the system. An audit trail of the analytical process was provided to indicate each step in the data analysis. This is depicted in figure 5.1 as an uncluttered linear SID.

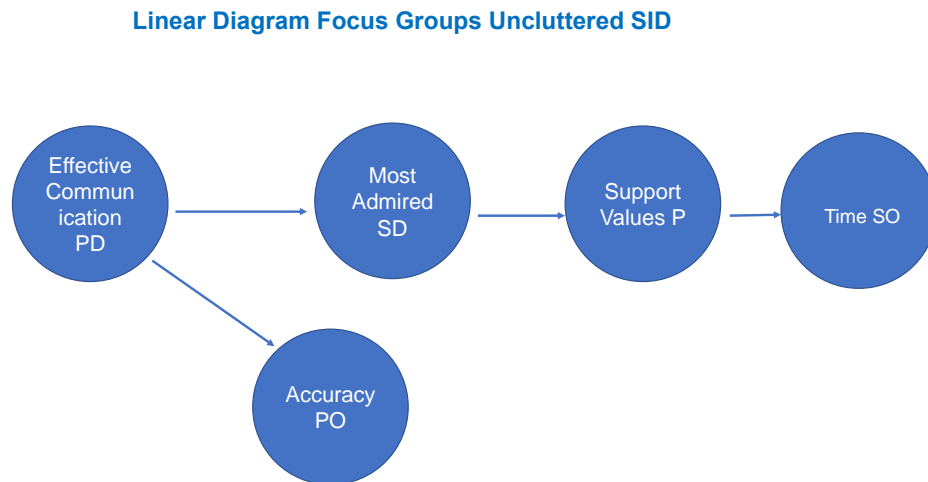


Figure 5.1. Uncluttered Linear SID

Source: Author

5.2.1 Primary driver: Effective communication

In the discussions with the participants during the focus group, effective communication was identified by the group who had participated in the AI and the group who had not, as the core dimension that was influenced by the AI intervention. The AI intervention thus helped them to effectively impart and relay the required knowledge to all members of the work team. The participants referred to a set of values that were displayed within the department by means of large posters which served as a daily reminder of what the work team was working towards. This, according to the group, was necessary for the team to effectively formulate the following core statements:

- deliver the best
- when the tough get going keep the fire burning
- grow together
- access with the organisation the opportunity and beyond
- the team (organisation) is dedicated to clinch every challenge

- growing education-by working together, the team sees this as an opportunity for each member to learn.

5.2.2 Secondary driver: Most admired

The secondary drivers are the relative causes of influence on the affinities in the system. These are identified as having both out and in arrows, but there are more “outs” than “ins”.

Prior to the AI intervention, this team had frequently been in the “red spotlight”, which, according to the method used by the organisation, is to “show” or “highlight” the underperforming work teams in the organisation on a monthly basis within the organisation. Since both those members who had and those who had not participated in the AI intervention felt this was demeaning and lowered the overall morale of the work team, it was of utmost importance to all members in the IQA focus group that they should do everything they could possibly do as a work team to prevent this from occurring in the future. As a result of the AI intervention, the focus thus shifted from the “red spotlight” team to the the most admired team.

5.2.3 Pivot: Supporting values

The pivot of supporting values had an equal number of “ins” and ‘outs”, and subsequently this was as much a cause as an effect on the other affinities. During the AI intervention, the five core values were set.

During the focus group and the interviews that followed, the team stated the following: “The session brought us together, prior we had many differences now there is less negativity”. “We support the values that we set during the AI”. “There has been an improvement in the general morale of this team”.

5.2.4 Primary outcome: Accuracy

The primary outcome in the system was identified as the affinity with only “ins” but no “outs”. According to Northcut and McCoy (2004), it is a significant effect that is caused by many of the affinities, but does not affect others. Accuracy is an essential element of what this team requires for effective output of the final product. Less attention to accuracy means the product will be returned because the job is incomplete.

The work team felt that after the AI intervention, the focus had shifted to accuracy, and communication enabled the levels of accuracy to improve, resulting in fewer returns and ultimately “no red spotlight”. The AI intervention also influenced the quality of their work - hence not only the so-called “soft issues”, but also the quality of production.

5.2.5 Secondary outcome: Time

Time was identified as the secondary outcome, and the constituents emphasised how they were able to effectively utilise their time and produce the outcomes they desired. They expressed this as follows:

“We are completing our tasks within the given time.”

“We are helping each other finish our work in time.”

For this work team, the most important outcome was the effective utilisation of time. This was identified as the primary outcome because of the number of “ins” and no “outs”. According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004), the primary outcome is the significant effect caused by many of the affinities, but one that does not affect the others.

The constituents in the IQA focus group described how effective communication and fewer error reports had resulted in the stock-takes being completed on time. One constituent explained this as follows: “No need to work on a Sunday when we work effectively”. The AI also influenced the quality of their work, not only the so-called the “soft issues” but also the quality of production

5.3 FINDINGS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEWS

The individual interviews that were conducted during the IQA process after the focus group session, provided analytical and interpretive intensity to the SIDs. The interviews themselves were not a new phase of data collection, but more accurately a chance for the constituents to reflect on the individual meaning the phenomenon had for them. The uncluttered linear SID (figure 5.1) was shown to the constituents for the duration of the interviews and was utilised as the motivation for the discussion. The constituents who were interviewed all agreed with the notion that had

been deduced in the SID. When further questioned about the arrangement of the affinities on the SID, they responded as follows:

Respondent 1: "I see an improvement in the team communication."

Respondent 3: "As a team, we are supporting the values and each other, we are working as one team."

Respondent 1: "We are no longer in the red spotlight."

Respondent 5: "We communicate more effectively now with each other, the AI helped us to do this."

Respondent 3: "The AI helps us to look at our values more and to support these and each other."

Respondent 4: "We are completing our tasks within the given time."

Respondent 2: "We are helping each other finish our work in time."

Respondent 1: "The sessions brought us together."

Respondent 5: "We are committed to communication."

Respondent 5: "We are working accurately and not making as many mistakes: this makes us one of the most admired teams."

Respondent 4: "Eye opening with regard to communication; we talk more to each other."

Once the researcher had coded all the interviews, the data from the interviews were encapsulated to create a composite of the individuals' experience with the phenomenon. Axial data was transferred from each individual interview axial code table to a combined interview axial code table (Northcutt & McCoy 2004, p. 315).

5.4 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The rationale of this research was to explore the impact of AI as an intervention when performed after a merger. The study endeavoured to determine the impact of

AI by learning about and interpreting the experiences of the employees who participated in the process. The study aimed to add to the literature by gaining a knowledge of the impact of AI and providing an additional dimension to enable organisations to develop a culture after a merger.

Martins and Terblanche (2006, p. 64) define organisational culture as the deep-seated values and beliefs that the members of an organisation share. These values and beliefs have been perceived to work well for the organisation in the past and have therefore been accepted by the organisation as valid. It is these values and beliefs that assist the organisation in further understanding the practices and the way in which objectives and goals are achieved. The AI intervention assisted the participants, firstly, to identify new values for the work team and to embed those values in the daily work of the team.

Secondly, the team accepted and identified with the new values. Thirdly, they did not display resistance towards changing their values, which is what normally happens with traditional change management interventions (Cooperrider, 1987). The AI helped them to embed the new values.

The findings appear to support those of Cooperrider (1987), namely that the AI assists the organisation to construct and create new ideas, perceptions and metaphors, in the promotion of enriched organisational culture transformation. The powerful nature of these ideas establishes a number of distinctive methods for transformation. In a pivotal way, AI involves, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. AI basically involves the mobilisation of inquiry through the crafting of the unconditional positive question, often involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people (Cooperrider, 2005).

The findings of this study also supports the claims of Bushe and Kassam (2005, p. 163) AI differs from other standard OD interventions due to the following.

- AI results in new knowledge, models and theories.
- AI results in a generative metaphor that compels new action.

The work team members started to communicate effectively with each other as a result of the AI intervention, which was evident in the outcomes of the IQA focus group and the affinity of effective communication, whereby the work team was able to effectively impart and relay the required knowledge to all members of the team. This has led to increased productivity and is a direct result of the AI intervention that was conducted. Gergen (2003) defines this generativity as the "capacity to challenge the directorial assumptions of the culture, to nurture central questions concerning present-day social life, to further re-evaluate that which is 'taken for granted' and thus endow innovative substitutions for collective actions". The construction of this more generative discovery question, as put to the Focus Group consisting of a sample of the work team during the AI intervention, permitted the individuals to deliberate other strategies to advance in the transformation of the organisation (Bushe, 2013). The transformation indicated would be the vicissitudes pertaining to the uniqueness of the system, environment and the qualitative changes in the state of being of that system.

The know-hows of positive emotions extend an individual's momentary thought action collections, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Frederickson, 2001). It is postulated that moments in people's lives are characterised by the experiences of positive emotions. Positive emotion states are worth cultivating as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved well-being over time (Fredrickson 2001). This finding is supported by Achor (2010), namely that individuals with a positive mind-set do have a greater generative capacity.

The roots of AI lie in OD, and as such, one of the aims of AI is to generate sustainable, positive change within the organisation. This positive change was reflected in this study, and was especially evident when the work team referred to no longer being in the "red spotlight". This was a positive outcome of the AI intervention conducted for this study, Cooperrider (2003) noted, that when asking questions about what people valued in their organisation, they spoke freely, which provided greater insight into the assumptions and beliefs underlying everyday practice. This was seen and noted again in the IQA focus group that followed the AI intervention, where people were allowed to express their thoughts freely.

According to Northcutt and McCoy, (2004, p. 16), in IQA, “the observer and the observed are dependent or interdependent”. “The object of research in IQA is clearly reality in consciousness” (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 16).

In IQA, the selection of constituents is from those closest to the phenomenon. In this study. Not all of the staff were involved in AI because the researcher wished to facilitate a comparative view of the success/failure of AI as an intervention. It is evident from the findings that the AI intervention contributed to improved communication within the work team and between management and the work team. This resulted in increased and more accurate productivity. The management and work team members who were respondents in the IQA agreed that the intervention had contributed to a more coherent and effective team in this area. After the intervention, the team definitely appeared to be operating more cohesively.

The AI intervention not only contributed to the so-called “soft-issues” such as communication and relationships, but also to the bottom line in relation to such issues as time management practices within the company, improved quality and return time on repairs, and fewer returns for faulty repairs.

The research concluded that the overall perception of the AI intervention was that it was both well received and meaningful to the employees who had participated in the intervention and those who had not. Furthermore the AI was and the results that were evident over time were substantiated by the IQA process.

5.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the findings of the focus group sessions were documented and the subsequent interviews that followed discussed. The findings of the focus group studies were then evaluated and this included the results of the five affinities. The outcomes relating to the primary driver, the secondary driver, the pivot, the primary outcome and the secondary outcome were considered. The findings of the interview process were then evaluated. This was followed by an assessment of the conversation relating the findings.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The general aim of this study was to determine the impact of an AI intervention on the development of organisational culture after a merger. In this chapter, conclusions are formulated on the basis of the literature review and the results of the empirical research. The limitations are discussed and recommendations made for industrial psychologists working in the field of organisational culture and for possible further research.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn on the basis of the literature review and the empirical research:

6.2.1 Theoretical conclusions

The first theoretical aim, namely to conceptualise the concept of organisational culture, was achieved in chapter 2. It was concluded that most of the definitions of organisational culture have similarities. The definition of organisational culture includes the shared values, beliefs and basic assumptions held by organisational members as individuals. For the purpose of this study, organisational culture was conceptualised as follows, according to the following definition of Schein (1992, p. 12): “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems”. The importance of organisational culture was discussed and the review of the literature revealed that although organisations try to develop strong cultures, in order to be competitive and stay relevant in today’s turbulent environment, that very same strong culture can become a problem when it is no longer relevant. Organisations therefore need to try to find a balance between having a strong culture, but at the same time remaining adaptable. A number of demonstrative models of organisational culture were discussed in the literature review.

The second theoretical aim of this study was to conceptualise AI, which was defined in chapter 3 as the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations and the pertinent world about them (Cooperrider, 2005). AI is distinctive in the discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most beneficial in economic, ecological and human terms (Cooperrider, 2005). AI was developed as a method to encourage social innovation by involving people in discovering the “best of what is”.

AI strengthens a system’s ability to understand itself and inquires into and benchmarks the high points, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies of the organisation into the deeper corporate visions of treasured and achievable potential (Cooperrider, 2005). AI is based on the assumption that every organisation or system has to some degree a phenomenon that works properly and pertains to the processes and issues that give the organisation life when it is most alive and successful (Cooperrider et al, 2008). The type of discovery phase question that would generate more awareness, would inspire the individual to talk about the most thought-provoking experience they experienced during the culture transformation process (Bushe, 2013). AI is a process that inquires into, identifies and further develops the best of what is in organisations in order to create a better future (Coghlan et al., 2003, p. 5).

The approach works by focusing on the positive and collectively constructing ways of building and contributing to the strengths-based development the organisation. A central supposition of AI, according to Cooperrider (2003, p. 27) is “that organisations move toward what they study”. “The AI approach is not an immediate solution that corrects the deficits in the organisation, but is a method that involves the entire organisation in what is termed a “whole system event” (Reed, 2007).

Furthermore, AI is described as “social construction in action” (McNamee in Reed 2007, p. viii). This assertion depicts the central role ascribed to the function of the social construction in the approach. “Constructionism proposes that the most important aspect of social life is what people do together, because in their joint actions people create a world that values certain beliefs and practices” (McNamee, 2003, p. 23). In other words, the meaning given to particular representations of people,

objects and phenomena informs our experience of these people, objects and phenomena, which are then shared through a shared language that aids the construction of reality (Gergen et al., 2004; Valsiner, 2006; Van Sant, 1989).

The above discussion provided the basis for the empirical study.

6.2.2 Conclusions relating to the empirical study

The three empirical aims of this study were to:

- Design and facilitate an AI intervention
- Explore the impact of the AI on the organisational culture after a merger
- Discuss the implications relating to the change and adaptation of organisational cultures and to make recommendations for future research

The first empirical aim was to design and facilitate an AI intervention. This AI intervention necessitated the effective participation of all members during the four stages of the 4-D AI process, namely the definition of the affirmative topic and the discovery or uncovering of what is good about the current situation of the team of which they are part.

The members then dreamt (envisaged) the ideal of what could be imagined, together with the design of the future of the organisation in collaboration with the formation of a positive proposition statement. The final destiny phase allowed the participants to cocreate action plans that could be employed on a daily basis, thus promoting the maintenance of the desired future for both the team and the organisation.

The participants in this intervention were introduced to the AI process and an explanation of the process was given. The work team was fully aware of the recent restructuring and were eager to start the day by working towards a more integrated work unit.

The researcher was responsible for the facilitation of the AI intervention in this particular study. She had undergone training in AI and had completed the AI programme at the University of South Africa. The researcher as the facilitator was an outsider or observer in relation to the group of participants because she was not

employed by the organisation. She had to familiarise herself with the organisation and the needs of the both the participants and management. According to Reed (2007,p. 83) ‘the position of viewing the process as an outsider allows the researcher to propose views that would not perhaps be voiced by someone accustomed to the world being studied’.

The second empirical aim was to explore the impact of the AI on the organisational culture after a merger. The constituents were allowed to by means of silent brainstorming to probe their experiences of the AI. The data was collected in two phases, which is in accordance with IQA protocols (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The initial phase consisted of the focus group and the production of a visual representation referred to as a SID (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), which was subsequently used in the second phase, which comprised individual semistructured interviews. According to Northcutt & McCoy (2004), the role of the researcher in an IQA focus group is that of a facilitator with the aim of allowing the constituents to reflect on their experiences of the phenomenon being researched.

The focus group session began with a clarification or warm-up exercise. Here the participants were asked to reflect back on the AI session and the research exercise (the positive core statements generated during this session had been placed on the wall in the room). The question was put to both sets of members who formed the focus group because those who had not attended the AI session were familiar with what had happened.

Common perceptions were noted, and each constituent had slightly diverse insights. This process was preceded by the facilitator providing an issue statement which was used to “deconstruct and operationalise the research question” (Mampane & Bouwer 2011, p. 117). The following issue statement was then put to the group: “When you think back on the process of Appreciative Inquiry that you as a team have recently undertaken to try and integrate and work together in order to be more productive, how has it impacted this team?” The members who had not been present at the AI session were asked to reflect back on the process in general and the integration of the team after the intervention.

The above responses showed that the newly formed team was committed to working together to deliver the best and to be the most admired team in the workforce. The posters were placed in the area where the team worked on a daily basis as a reminder of what they had achieved during the AI session.

The affinities of accuracy, time, to be the most admired, effective communication and support of the company values were identified as themes that impacted on the functioning of the team. Regarding the relationship between the affinities, it was found that strong relationships were evident between the affinities of time, value support, most admired, effective communication and accuracy.

A noteworthy conclusion of this study was how the focus group, even though it comprised individuals who had and who had not participated in the AI, drew similar conclusions about the affinities they felt had an impact on the work conducted on a daily basis by the team.

Supporting or work values are crucial to personal commitment and the maintenance of this support over a period of time. Relationships are formed and develop over time. Individuals are more aware of each other's needs and value input of what is important to the functioning of the team. The team feels more empowered.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the research relate to the literature review and the empirical study.

6.3.1 Limitations of the literature review

There is a lack of academic studies and comprehensive bodies of knowledge on the impact of AI as an intervention for change, especially in the South African context. This limited the researcher's efforts to find more varied research data.

6.3.2 Limitations of the empirical study

The language employed in the study could be considered a limitation as the study was conducted in English, the official language of the telecommunications company. For many employees, however, English is their second language and this

could have had a negative effect on their understanding of the affirmative topic questions.

The positive impact that the IQA could have had on the experience was not clear. The nature of the IQA experience could also have added to the positive experience of the participants, and this was not explored with the two groups. This interpretation is supported by Gergen's social constructionistic view (Geldenhuys, 2015) on the creation of reality according to which reality is cocreated in a continuous manner.

6.3.3 The sample

The sample for this study was limited to the various teams in the organisation, and not the whole organisation. The constituents in this study were a purposive sample of 13 members of staff who had participated in the AI, and seven members of staff and management who had not participated.

Owing to the nature of the business and time constraints, the researcher was compelled to group together those individuals who had participated in the AI and those who had not. This had a negative impact on the researcher's ability to make a clear comparison.

6.3.4 Data

The fact that the interviews were conducted immediately after the focus group session was a limitation because it did not give the researcher time to draw up an interview sheet. In addition, the fact that the particular organisation did not allow any form of recording device to be operated in the work area was problematic for the researcher because she was unable to listen and immediately transcribe word for word what the participants were saying.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The third empirical aim of this study was to discuss the implications regarding the change and adaptation of organisational cultures, and to make recommendations for future research. Notwithstanding the limitations of the current research, the implications of the findings for the practice of industrial and organisational psychology and recommendations for further research are highlighted below.

6.4.1 Implications for industrial psychologists working in the field of change

The findings of the study should have implications for the use of AI interventions to develop organisational culture after a merger. AI could, for instance, improve communication and assist with the general alignment of values. After a merger of an organisations, improved communication might lead to the team being the most admired, the values of the organisation and those set by the team might be supported, and there could be more accuracy in the workplace and increased productivity within a certain time frame.

The second implication is that industrial psychologists should be trained in the design and implementation of an AI intervention because this forms the basis for the collective positive vision of the organisation and the individuals in it.

6.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Owing to the limitations of this study, and more specifically the fact that no empirical studies could be found that use IQA to compare the impact of AI on merging cultures, it is recommended that more research on this topic should be conducted in organisations. It is further recommended that a number of diverse organisations across various industries could be selected to participate in the research.

IQA can be used in a more complementary manner to substantiate and develop a more detailed understanding of the impact of AI in merging cultures. Herewith the third empirical aim of this study was achieved.

6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The conclusions relating to the empirical research and the specific and empirical aims were discussed in this chapter.

The limitations of the study were then highlighted and recommendations made for industrial psychologists working in the field of OD. Suggestions for possible future research were also recommended.

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APPENDIX 1 - LETTER OF PERMISSION



08 September 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm, that I Lianda Joubert in my capacity as Managing Director of Ghekkko hereby give Carol Earley student no: 05922038 currently doing research with Dirk Geldenhuys professor in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa , consent to undertake her research proposal to conceptualise the development of organisational culture after a merger, using the information derived from the AI intervention related to Ghekkko. What impact can AI as an intervention theoretically make on a developing organisational culture.

1. How do employees experience AI as an intervention and its related impact on the participants. It is foreseen based on the research findings of is study, that it will be reasonable to determine the elements of AI that impact the organisation and that organisations could utilise, during a period of transition/flux that will benefit Industrial and Organisational Psychologists and individuals working in the field to intensify their understanding of the ability of AI and its research capacity to such organisations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lianda Joubert".

Lianda Joubert
Managing Director

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